

Checkley



WHERE TIME STANDS STILL

JIM FOLEY

This book is dedicated to my wife Chris who supported and encouraged me throughout the project, and to my ten year old daughter Laura who accompanied me on most of my field work trips.

Cover photo

A postcard view of Church Lane, Checkley
circa 1920

Boys: Arthur Moore and George Phillips

FOREWORD

This book is not a history of Checkley. I leave that onerous task to the Checkley Historical Society.

This book is a record of people talking about their memories of the village, its people and the traditions and legends that have been handed down from generation to generation.

Recently I was asked why I was writing about Checkley. When my family came to live in Checkley opposite the Post Office we were keen to find out about the village and its folklore.

One of the first stories we heard was the one about Mrs. Hutchinson's ghost. I wanted to know more. I couldn't find a single book about Checkley. There were a number of little books concentrating on the Church, its monuments and benefactors, but nothing about the village and its inhabitants.

I started asking local people about their memories and they were only too pleased to tell me about their lives and families.

I enjoyed their stories so much I felt they had to be recorded and passed on so other people could read and enjoy them too.

I am grateful to Jack and Joyce Hurst, Checkley Post Office; Steve McCall, Spar Shop, Tean and David Martin, Spar Shop, Uttoxeter for agreeing to sell this book in their shops.

CHECKLEY - BACKGROUND

"The little river Tean flows murmuring to the Dove; the smiling fields, the splendid trees, and the snug hedgerows carry the eye to the hills swelling on the horizon. Little can have changed in this beautiful country since the Normans built their Church, a wonderful picture as we look down on it from Checkley Bank."

Thus did Arthur Mee in his book on Staffordshire in the King's England series introduce Checkley village in 1937. Thankfully the village is much the same today despite the housing estates that have sprung up around it.

Arriving at Checkley from the A522 Uttoxeter to Cheadle road for the first time and turning into Church Lane you are immediately struck by the wonderful Norman Church of St. Mary and All Saints. Your gaze is then drawn to simple dwellings full of character and charm which frame the Church on both sides of the lane. I always ask myself, how did our ancestors manage to build such a wonderful Church without the aid of modern machines and technology? What faith they had.

As you continue through the village, past the Red Lion Inn and Manor Farm there is this awesome feeling that this is an ancient place and that at any moment you will encounter a Checkley resident from a bygone age, or that you will have to pull back for a dashing stage coach coming up the Old Road from Deadman's Green on its way to Newcastle and beyond.

At the crossroads there is an old road which takes you down to the medieval Rectory Farm and the ford across the river Tean. At one time a bridle road used to go up Checkley Bank to the village of Leigh.



Three Saxon Stones in Checkley Churchyard. Tradition has it that they are in memory of three bishops killed in a battle between Saxons and Danes at Deadman's Green, half a mile away. The stones could possibly have been one large tapering stone. Surely it's time they were stored in the Church or enclosed in some way to prevent further weathering.

Back at the crossroads there is the old road down to Deadman's Green. It is very narrow. It is more than likely that all country roads were like that 200 years ago and one wonders what happened when two carriages met.

Tradition has it that there was a battle near Deadman's Green between the Saxon inhabitants and the invading Danes at a place called Naked Fields.

In the Churchyard at Checkley are three Saxon Stones supposed to commemorate that battle.

Checkley is mentioned in the Domesday Book commissioned by William the Conqueror in 1086. From this we know there was a village here called Cedla before the Normans came in 1066. Cedla or Cecca's leah researchers of place-names tell us, meant Cecca's wood or Cecca's clearing or open land, in a wood.

Before 1066 Cedla was held by Wulfgeat, a freeman, who also held Tean and Bramshall. There was plough land, meadowland and woodland valued at 5/- and there were 3 villagers. In Tean there were 6 villagers, 6 smallholders and 3 slaves and its value was 30/-. After the Conquest Otto held Checkley and Robert of Stafford held Tean, probably for their services during the campaign.

The tower of St. Mary and All Saints is supposed to date from 1120 A.D., 54 years after the Battle of Hastings. If it's true the Normans certainly didn't waste any time in building their churches. I often wonder why they chose Checkley and not, say, Tean - was there already a Saxon Church on the site? Inside the Church is a baptismal font said to be of Danish/Saxon origin - 1,000 years old.

The Cistercians, a strict monastic order, came over from France at the request of Bertram de Verdun, Lord of Alton. At first they settled at Cotton in 1176 but moved to Croxden in 1179 where they built their monastery using the local stone from Hollington. They developed sheep farming on a large scale, exporting wool all over Europe.

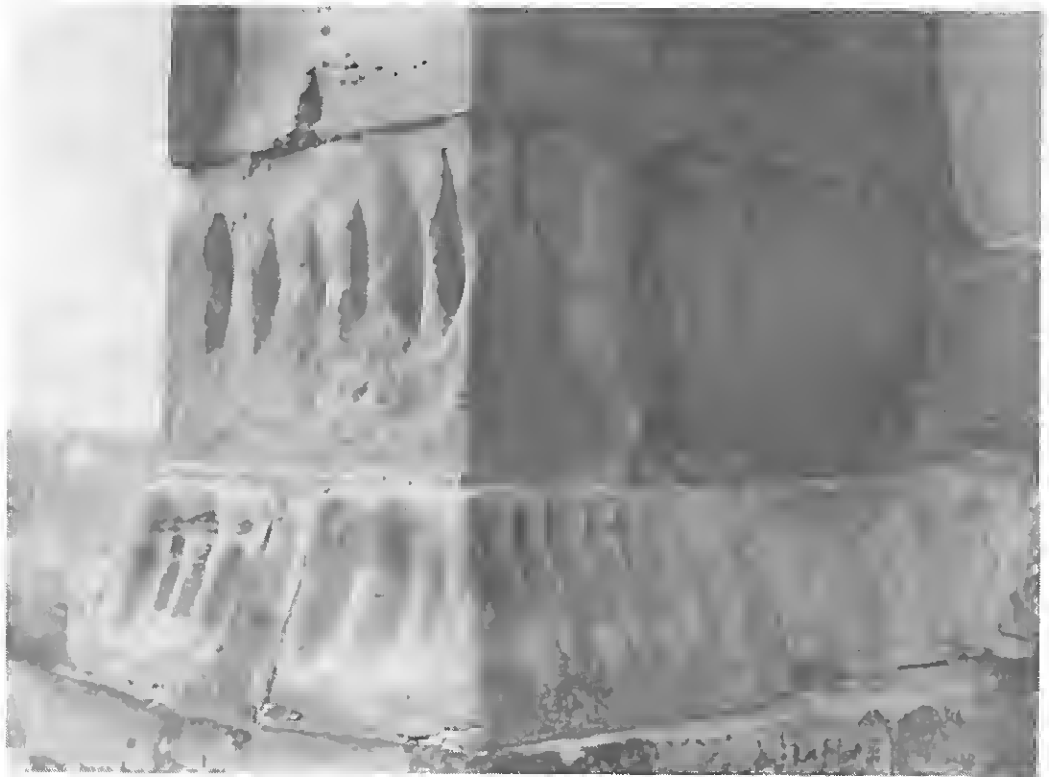
It is believed locally that there were strong links between Checkley Church and Croxden Abbey which is only three miles distant. The last Abbot of Croxden, Thomas Chawner, who died in 1544 is buried in the chancel of Checkley Church.

Rev. T.H. Brookes in his article about Checkley in 1940 in Staffordshire Life writes, "a path leading to Croxden is known as the "Bishop's Walk"

The Croxden Chronicle was written by the monks of Croxden Abbey and was a record of monastic life in the Abbey and noting local and national news. It was written between 1170 and 1377. One of the monks, William Shepshed, kept the Chronicle for 40 years. There is a copy in the British Library and the Bodleian Library, Oxford. What fascinating reading it will make when it becomes more widely available. It should certainly throw light on life in the area 800 years ago.

The Abbey was suppressed by King Henry VIII on 17 September 1538. On 15 October 1538 the roof of Croxden was purchased for £6 by the wardens of Checkley Church, Sir Thomas Gilbert and Edmund Wetheryns. Beams in the roof of Checkley Church are exactly the width of the walls of the ruined Abbey Church.

In 1581 Henry VIII passed a law saying that the inhabitants of all towns and villages must make and maintain Archery Butts and exercise there on Sundays and holidays. The grooves on the south east and south outside walls of Checkley Church could date from this period when local bowmen sharpened their arrow heads. George Philips, in his booklet Facts and Fancies about Checkley Church, 1948, put them to 1415 the year of Agincourt.



The grooves in the buttress of Checkley Church supposed to have been caused by medieval bowmen sharpening their arrow heads.

The road from Uttoxeter to Newcastle under Lyme was turnpiked by Act of Parliament in 1759. Groups of local trustees in each parish were responsible for the stretches of road in their parish and for collecting tolls from the users to help towards the upkeep of the roads. On several old maps around that period a tollgate is shown just as you leave Checkley near Rose Cottage and Checkley Cricket Club, Four Trees.

The turnpikes ushered in the coaching age and by 1822 plans were drawn up to by-pass Checkley. It must have been a nightmare at times coming through Deadman's Green and up that narrow road into Checkley if a coach and horses encountered a local carrier ambling along. I'm sure there was local opposition to the diversion as an inn like the Red Lion probably stood to lose trade. There used to be stables there as well as at Hawthorn Cottage. The local farriers - the Walters - wouldn't want to see the trade moving from their front door.

Sometime after 1822 the by-pass was built and in the end did Checkley a favour as the village today can't be very different from what it looked like one hundred years or more ago.

The New Inn - now the New Broom pub - was probably built to try and catch trade from the passing traffic on the new road.

I often wonder if the plaque on the back wall of Wisbar House depicting a lady with long hair had any connection with the coaching era. It has a Georgian look about it. Despite a photograph in the local press no-one could enlighten me about its origins. Some Checkley people didn't even know of its existence.



The mysterious plaque
on the wall at the back
of Wisbar House.

A short walk from Checkley up the old road at the back of Hawthorn Cottage brings you to Goldhurst Farm and the Hollington to Tean Road. This road is clearly marked on the Ordnance Survey map as part of a Roman road. It is shown cutting through the grounds of Heath House.

Possibly it was part of the Roman Ryknild Street which ran from Gloucester, through Birmingham and continued straight as a die from Wall, near Lichfield, through Burton-on-Trent to Derwentio (Little Chester) near Derby. From there a Roman road went to Rocester where there was a Roman settlement. It then continued on through Hollington, Tean and Draycott to Chesterton near Newcastle under Lyme. From there it would have gone on to Middlewich - a salt producing centre - and thence to Chester where there was a Roman fort and on to the North-west seaboard.

Salt was a basic necessity of life and trade in salt and other commodities would have been in existence along pre-historic tracks long before the Romans came.

A saltway could have existed along that route before the Roman road. The road was probably used well into the middle ages when the main form of transporting goods was the packhorse and packhorse trains must have been a common sight in those days.

Checkley therefore was never very far from trade routes and all the advantages associated with them like access to goods, bartering, news of the outside world and gossip from neighbouring towns and villages.



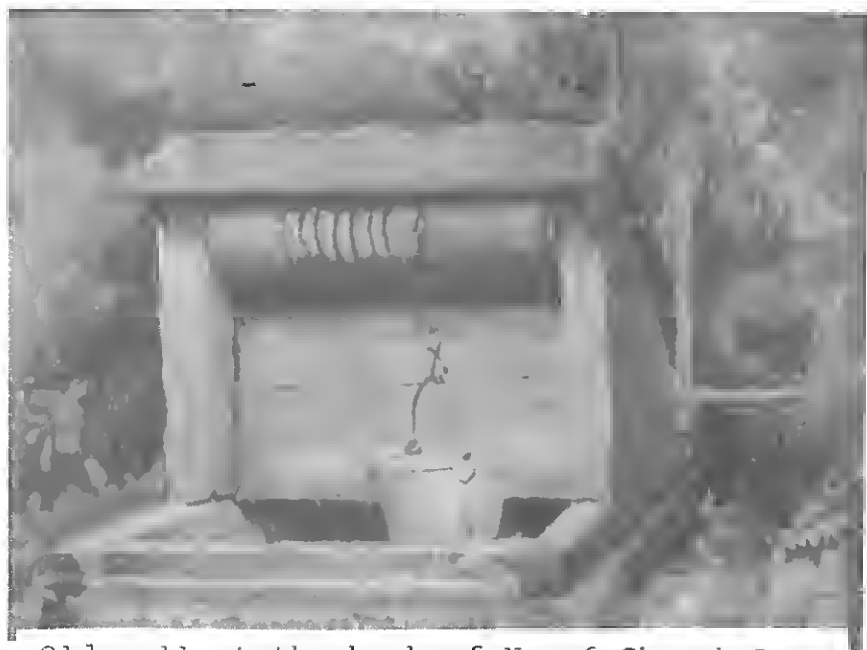
Hall Green House - the home of Ern Wright and his wife Olive who used to be District Nurse for the area. Ern Wright told me that his house used to be Checkley Parish Workhouse.

CHECKLEY - LOCAL MEMORIES





Ivy Cottage, Church Lane, Checkley



Old well at the back of No. 6 Church Lane
from a painting by Alfred Hurst

I was born Elsie Mary Moore on 20 June 1912 at Ivy Cottage - Now Church Cottage - Church Lane, Checkley.

My Father, John William Moore, came from Hanford, near Stoke-on-Trent. He worked as a quarryman at Hollington Quarry and every day except Sundays he walked the three miles across the fields to his work and back again.

My Mother, Elizabeth Bamford, was born at Lane Head, Lower Tean on 1 January 1869. Her Father worked as a gardener for the Philips family of Heath House and he and his family lived at Lane End Cottages.

I had three brothers, William, George Arthur and Albert Frederick and six sisters, Sarah, Elizabeth Ann, Amy, Emily Jane and Rose Lillian. Apart from Sarah and William, we were all born in our parents' front bedroom at Ivy Cottage. In March 1921 my Father bought the house from Burton Henry Philips, having rented it from him for some twenty years or more before that. We lived there until 1950 when my Father died and the house was sold.

When we were children there was no running water in the village. We fetched water in buckets from a well at the back of what is now No. 6 Church Lane. Sadly the well is now covered over.

In those days No. 8 was part of a coach-house used by the Philips family of Heath House when they attended Sunday service at St. Mary's and All Saints Church.

There is a picture postcard of Checkley taken about 1920 with two boys in the foreground and the stable doors are plainly visible. The boy on the left of the photo

is my brother Arthur and the one on the right is his friend, George Phillips - no relation to the Philips family of Tean.

There were no inside toilets in those days. We used an earth-closet at the end of the garden. It was a hole in the ground covered by a wooden box with two holes in it and a wooden cover. Once a week we religiously scrubbed the seats. Twice a year the Council sent a scavenger cart round to empty the closet.

At the side of the house was a barn which my Father used as a store and which we called 'the stable'. On the ground floor Dad kept a supply of coal. George Plant from Cheadle delivered the coal in his horse and dray. I remember him collecting coal from the railway station at Leigh.

My Father made a rope swing for us from the beams of the barn and we spent many a happy hour there.

Upstairs my Father stored his onions. At the back of the house was the pigsty. When the pig was well-fattened my Father had it killed. It was then cut up and cured on the cold slabs in the pantry behind the living room. The salted bacon was then hung up on hooks in various parts of the house.

When we were children we used to recite a rhyme about Checkley:

Upper Tean, Lower Tean,
Beamhurst and Fole
Leigh Church and Park Hall
And Checkley in the Hole.





The Moore Family, Checkley. Circa 1917

Back Row, Left to Right:

Elizabeth Ann, Amy, Sarah, Alice, John William,
Emily Jane.

Seated Left to Right:

George Arthur, Elsie Mary, John William Moore
(Father), Elizabeth Moore (Mother), Albert
Frederick, Rose Lillian

There was no electricity in those days and we used candles or oil lamps when it got dark. There was no street lighting at all in Checkley. We had no hot water bottles and so in winter we used to leave large round shiny stones in the bottom of the oven all day. At night we'd drop them into large thick stockings and put them in our beds.

At the side of the house we kept chickens so we had a regular supply of fresh eggs and meat for the Sunday table. I used to fetch the milk in a can from Mr. Halden of Rectory Farm.

My Father was a very keen gardener and we always had plenty of fresh vegetables. Potatoes were dried and stored in the stair-hole along with the carrots. We had five damson trees, so we made plenty of jam. Some of the damsons were bottled or pickled.

My Father used to sweep the chimney using a holly branch.

At the back of where Checkley Community Centre now is there was a path leading up the hill and just over the top was a wood in a kind of hollow known as the 'Drumble'.

Every year in late September we used to go picking blackberries in the Drumble. It was a beautiful sight there in Spring with masses of bluebells, Lady Smocks and all kinds of wild flowers.

Round about September the whole family would walk to the Wakes in Uttoxeter - a distance of five miles - and back again. We also went to the Wakes at Tean. It was a regular event to walk to the market at Uttoxeter. If we were lucky we'd catch a ride with a farmer on his horse and cart.

After tea every Sunday if it was fine we would go for a walk with Mother and Dad through the fields to Tean. I remember when I was a child my Mother used to walk down the fields and over the footbridge across the River Tean and up the bank to Leigh Station, where she caught a train to Longton. About once a month she did her shopping there. She came back by train, there being no other transport back to Checkley.

In winter we'd play games by candlelight or paraffin lamp-light. We'd try to stop any draughts by using home-made screens - old Christmas cards glued on to plywood with flour paste.

In Summer we'd play hopscotch, rounders, bowlers, skipping, hide-and-seek, or have a paper chase in the village streets.

It was considered to be bad luck to cross knives, to have a broken window, or to spill salt.

If you had a cold your Mother rubbed goose grease on your chest. For a sore throat a piece of very fat, raw bacon was wrapped round your throat.

I went to Checkley School where I was taught by one of two sisters - the Misses Whittington. Every day I went home for lunch. I only stayed off School once, got found out and was punished at home.



Left to right:
Rose Lillian, Elsie Mary (seated), Albert Moore
circa 1918

Once a year we had a School outing to Heath House, where we had lemonade and cakes in the garden.

When I came out of School after lessons I used to run any errands for an old lady, Mrs. Seabridge, who lived across the road from the Church. I'd get a round of bread and butter with jam for my efforts. Then I would go to shop for Mrs. Reeves of Hawthorn Cottage. She would always give me two Lincoln Cream biscuits, which I thought was great. Before tea I would go and pick a bag of sticks from the fields to light the fire.

Every night after tea I used to go to Mr. Bostock - no relation - with a large milk can and get it filled with skimmed milk after they had taken the cream off for butter. I would get a can full for a penny, which my Mother would use for making bread puddings, etc.

One afternoon my Mother was cooking a rabbit in the oven when she heard a popping noise. She thought it was the rabbit and got on with what she was doing. Later on she heard the dreadful news that the Rector, the Rev. George Philips, who lived in the Rectory across the road from us, had shot himself at about the time my Mother heard the noise. My Mother told me he left a note saying, "too difficult".

One morning, when my Father got up to go to work, he found that the floor of the room above the living room was hot through his stocking-feet. It was a solid floor made of lime, sand and horse hair. Dad hurried downstairs to discover that the wooden beam running through the inglenook was glowing red with an intense heat.



Mrs. Annie Reeves of Hawthorn Cottage, Checkley

He woke us all up and with water from the nearby well we managed to put the fire out. For some reason the beam had passed right through the chimney and had probably been alight for some time. Had the floor not been a solid one the house would surely have gone up in flames.

Nearly opposite Ivy Cottage was the village shop and Post Office, run by Mrs. Brough.

Mr. Forrester was the landlord of the Red Lion Inn and I used to fetch a can of ale for my Father when he came home from work at night.

There used to be a man from Tean who came along with his barrow and a brush and shovel to keep the pavements clean. Tom Pattinson from the New Inn pub - now the New Broom - was the road sweeper.

Once a month Toby Bloor came round selling fruit and vegetables from a cart, and a Mr. Scrithey from Cheadle used to call selling buttons, pins and cotton.

The postman used to walk from Upper Tean every day to deliver the post. I can remember three postmen from my childhood - Tinker Sims, Loney Hill and Mick Smith.

On Wednesdays the farm labourers drove herds of cattle along the main road to Uttcxeter for the cattle market.

The local doctors were Dr. Brownridge and Dr. Brown. Dr. Brownridge from Tean used to visit on horseback. I remember when he died and his burial at the Churchyard in Checkley. A local builder made the coffin. It was pushed on a hand-cart to the deceased's house, then placed in a horse-drawn hearse and taken to Checkley Church.

The cortege walked from his house in Tean, with the Doctor's horse being led behind the hearse with it's master's boots hanging from the saddle.

Christmas was a great time and we'd make preparations months beforehand. We'd make our own Christmas puddings and boil them in the big copper in the kitchen. Nearer Christmas we'd make a kissing bunch with holly, mistletoe, oranges and apples hanging from it. We would go carol singing carrying a scooped-out turnip or mangle with a lighted candle inside. Every year at this time I would help Mr. & Mrs. Sam Forrester, who ran the Red Lion, with plucking and dressing the turkeys which they reared specially to sell at Christmas.

On Christmas Eve we girls would hang out our long black stockings for Father Christmas. I recall those days as very happy ones, although we only got a few nuts and an orange at the bottom of the stocking with maybe an apple, a few sweets and a spinning top or some marbles.

I remember the postman coming on Christmas Day when we were having our tea at about 5 o'clock. He was half drunk, but he would always have a mince pie and another drink.

Because we were a big family my brother Arthur left school when he was 11 and went to work at Brittlebanks Farm, Lower Tean as a farm boy. His wages were 1/6 a week and he lived in. He only got his wages at the end of the year.

I left school at 14 in 1926 and went into Service with Mr. and Mrs. Sawyers at Teanhurst. The husband owned a pot-bank in Stoke. I lived in. I didn't like the work so I left and went to work for a Mr. and Mrs. Babbs at Heybridge Farm in Lower Tean. When I was 18 I went to Fole Dairy tinning condensed milk.

I can remember a water-mill at Fole and also one at Lower Tean. On our Sunday walks our family often walked past the Mill at Lower Tean.

I met my husband when he came to my parents' house in Checkley to help his Father, who was a plumber and painter, to connect our house to the mains water system.

I married Thomas Henry Bostock 58 years ago on 19 May 1934 at Checkley Church. We had three children, Joan Elizabeth, Alan Henry and Margaret who died when she was just three weeks old. Our son Alan died four years ago at 52 from cancer. We have four grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

When World War Two broke out Harry joined the Royal Fusiliers. He was taken prisoner at Anzio Beachhead and was a P.O.W. for 2½ years, but that's another story.

My Father had a heart attack at work at Hollington on his 60th birthday. He was brought home in a vehicle and never worked again. He lived to be 83.

My Mother died on August 6 1943, aged 73 years. My Father died on May 3 1950, aged 83 years. They are both buried in Checkley Churchyard.

Harry and I are now back in Checkley.

I was born Rose Lillian Moore on 18 November 1906 at Ivy Cottage, (now Church Cottage), Church Lane, Checkley, Staffordshire.

I went to Checkley School when Mr. & Mrs. Salt were the teachers. I left school at 13 and started cleaning for the Salts at the School House, next to the school. After that I worked as a housemaid for Gallimore's at Deadman's Green. Later I worked for Mrs. Barker at Uttoxeter and Fieldings at Doveridge. For three years I was a maid at St. Mary and St. Anne's School, Abbots Bromley. My last job was as a housemaid for Bishop Haigh of Coventry and it was while working for him that I met my future husband, Roy Bradley. We married in 1935 and had three children and eight grand-children.

When I was a child in Checkley there used to be a man who came round with a barrel organ with a monkey on top of it. He also sharpened knives.

There used to be a public footpath which went down by the side of the Red Lion, over a foot-bridge across the River Tean and up the fields to Leigh.

At one time Church Lane was called Church View.

I, Thomas Henry Bostock, was born on 16 June 1909 at Swan House, High Street, Tean. It used to be a public house. My father Thomas was a plumber and painter and he used to repair all the water pumps around the area as that was the only water supply. I remember they were deep wells in the ground with a wooden pump and handle.

My mother, Elizabeth and her sister, Annie Hankers ran a laundry at home and did a lot of fancy shirts for the gentry as they had a lot of dances and do's in those days. My mother and her sister had special irons for the frills and used to heat them in front of the coal fire on a stand.

I attended Greatwood School in Tean. Most of the children used to have a little cart on wheels to collect the horse manure off the roads for the gardens. There were no motors in Tean in those days. We used to play whip and top along the road.

There was an old man in the village named John Collier who had a saddlers shop and he used to make harnesses for the horses. We used to go to him with our football to be mended as an excuse to get inside the shop out of the cold. The winters were rather severe in those days.

Most of the men worked at New Haden Coal Pit near Cheadle. They all used to wear clogs with steel tips. At 5 o'clock in the morning you could hear them rattle on the road. Most women worked in the Cotton Mill in Tean. They started work at 6 o'clock in the morning and didn't finish until 6 o'clock at night. The Mill used to make its own gas for lighting by burning gas coal which was kept in a large container in the yard.

The Mill used also to provide gas for the street lamps in the village. A man from the Mill would come round and light them when it got dark. He put them out again at 10 o'clock.

All the houses in those days had paraffin lamps. Farmers had to take their milk to the dairy by horse and cart. As children, we used to fetch milk from the farm in a can.

We children used to have two tea parties a year. We had one at Heath House given by Mr. & Mrs. Philips on the lawns and gardens and one at Heybridge, Lower Tean by another Mr. & Mrs. Philips. We used to march down escorted by the Tean Village Brass Band.

There was a public house in Tean called The Roe Buck Inn. The landlord was Uriah Prince and he had horses and coaches which he used just like a taxi business today. In a yard at the rear of the pub there were wooden stalls for cattle. It must have been a cattle market at some time.

There was an old man in the village who used to mend boots and shoes. He was called Smocky Middleton.

I remember during the 1914-1918 War an Artillery Regiment came through the village with guns drawn by horses. They filled the village street and village people were giving them tea and cakes.

Tean was well-known for its Gingerbread made by the baker, Mr. McGarry. People used to come from miles around to buy it but unfortunately when he died it wasn't the same any more.

My father used to tell me that he had to leave school when he was 10 years of age to earn money as his father had died. He went in service to a man named Jim McLaughlin who had a steam roller and threshing machine. The roads in those days were all granite stone prepared with soil and water. Mr. McLaughlin used to water the roads with a water cart and then roll them with his steam roller. It was all horses and carts in those days.

The mail used to be collected from the villages by horse and van and then taken to Stoke Station. Any incoming mail was brought back in the morning.

I left school at 13 and was an apprentice joiner to the village builder at 4/6d. (22½p.) for a 60 hour week.



I married Elsie Mary Moore in 1934 at Checkley Church.

War was declared against Germany on Sunday, 3 September 1939 at 11.30 a.m. I was called up on 6 May 1943. After training in England we sailed from Liverpool to Oran, North Africa where we arrived on Christmas Day 1943. From North Africa we were taken across the Mediterranean to Naples, Italy. We were moved towards the Front and near a little village called Fontanelli I joined up with 9th Batt. Royal Fusiliers. Later we were moved to the Anzio Bridgehead to reinforce the 8th Batt. Royal Fusiliers.

On Tuesday, 16 February 1944 I was taken prisoner. I spent the rest of the war in a number of P.O.W. camps - Stalag VllA, Mooburg and Stalag VlllC, Sagan, Germany. I started work on 17 October 1944 at a cement works at Breslau. On 23 January 1945 we were marched west away from the advancing Russians and finished up 800 k.m. away at Stalag VlllB, Ziegenhine on 10 March. Soon afterwards, on Good Friday 1945, we were liberated by the 3rd American Army.

After a medical examination to check that we were fit to travel and a visit to a de-lousing camp we were flown in a Dakota back to England. We stayed overnight in London. Next day I caught the train to Stoke-on-Trent and a bus to Longton where my wife Elsie was waiting for me with our two children, Alan (10) and Joan (8). My wife didn't recognise me at first as I was so emaciated and badly needed a shave. After two years wondering if I'd ever see my family again I was back home in Tean.

OPPOSITE PAGE

Elsie Moore and Harry Bostock astride Harry's Raleigh motor-bike on a visit to Foston, near Derby during their courting days, circa 1929.

Red X Ref No AM/112666 14 JUL 1944
BRITISH RED CROSS SOCIETY AND ORDER OF ST. JOHN

NEXT OF KIN PARCELS CENTRE.

CONTENTS

No.	lb.	Gift Chocolate added	No.	Item
1			2 Pkts	Needles
1				Towel
1				Handkerchiefs
2 Pkts				White Cotton
1 Pk.			1	Black Cotton
1				Mending Wool
1			15	Razor Blades
1/2 lb			1	Comb
1			1	Tin Tooth Paste
1			1	Tooth Brush
2 Doz.			1	Pencil

FUS. T. H. BOSTOCK
 B.P.O.W. 87022,
 STALAG VIII-C
 GERMANY.

P.E.

127964

From "FATHER WALSH"

13

PERSONAL PARCEL & CIGARETTES N.M.I.A.
 OCT 4th 1944.



Photo courtesy of Mrs. Edna Rowley (nee Rayson)
Left to Right:

BACK ROW Jim Coward, George Shingler, Sam Durose

FRONT ROW

Arthur Pattinson, George Wright, Charlie Beddow
Alfred Hurst

Tea Butler's Death Wednesday, October 18 1939.

Albert Ronald Turl, a butler employed by Mr. & Mrs. H.B. Philips at Oak Hill, Tea died in Longton Cottage Hospital on Thursday evening from injuries received in a motor-cycling accident at 8.15 the previous night. Turl, who was 32 years old, was riding his machine from Blythe Marsh towards Tea during the black-out when he was involved in a collision with a pedestrian, Ernest Salt of Keeper's Lane, Blythe Bridge. Turl, who was thrown from his machine sustained severe injuries and was removed to hospital in the Cheadle Ambulance. Salt was less seriously injured and taken home.

Uttoxeter & Ashbourne Times

(Uttoxeter Library) 29



The cross-roads Checkley
Beddow's house
and Checkley Church



The cross-roads Checkley
looking up New Lane

I was born on 28 June 1902 at The Anchor Inn, Teanford, Upper Tean. My parents were Tom Beddow and Cecile Mary Bailey. My full name was Thomas William Blackford Beddow. I had a brother, Charles, two years younger than me and a sister, Kathleen Mary, about ten years younger who now lives in Blythe Bridge under the married name of Meachem.

When I was about ten months old we went to live with my Mother's parents in Checkley. They lived in the cottage next to the Church and opposite Manor Farm. I believe the Milner family are now living there. The cottage belonged to the Philips of Heybridge.

My Grandfather came from Broseley in Shropshire and was a retired Royal Marine. My Grandmother's maiden name was Sarah Hall. Her dad, my Great-Grandfather, was Adam Hall. They are both buried in Checkley. My Grandmother died on 26 January 1909 when I was 7 years old. I remember the curtains were drawn for three days.

My Father worked as a gardener at Heybridge where there were about seven or eight other gardeners. In 1917 he was called up to fight in the Great War under the Lord Derby scheme. He was just a few months short of 41 years, when he would have been exempt. He survived the war.

Arthur Salt and his wife were teachers at Checkley School when I was there.

I remember walking to Uttoxeter when I was 5 or 6 years old with my Mother, and walking back again when we were finished shopping. If we were lucky we got a lift on a farmer's cart.

We had a pump in the back yard. The water was excellent. There was no electricity so we used oil lamps at night.

Mr. Prince was the landlord of the Red Lion.

The first Vicar I can remember is the Rev. Kenworthy Brown who left in 1908. He was followed by the Rev. G.W. Philips, who committed suicide in 1920. His health had been bad and he had received treatment for consumption. I believe he even went to Switzerland. He left a wife and three young children, Richard, Humphrey and Penelope.

When Mrs. Hurst's husband died she opened a shop and Post Office in the village.

There was a farrier, Mr. Cook, at Lower Tean.

The old School at Checkley used to be up the steps that led into the Churchyard next to our house. It was demolished and the bricks used to build the Reading Room at Tean, opposite the Dog and Partridge.

My mother's mother, Grandmother Bailey, took in washing for gentlefolk. She took in washing from Leigh Rectory. She used to do her ironing in the Old School at the back of her house.

I started work as a gardener at Heybridge but only stayed there three weeks as I didn't like it. My wages were about 6 or 7 shillings a week.

I then went to work at the mill at Fole where, like everybody else, I worked a twelve-hour shift from either 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. or 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. On Thursdays, when the shift changed, we had to work 24 hours from 7 a.m. on that day to 7 a.m. on the Friday. I started at 7/- a week, rising to 17/- after three years.

Golden Wedding photo of
Tom and Cecile Beddow with their family,
Checkley 1951



BACK ROW

Eric Meachem, Jean Beddow (Grand-daughter),
Edith Beddow (Daughter-in-law), Tom Beddow,
Kathleen Meachem (Daughter), Charles Beddow,
Kathleen Beddow (Daughter-in-law)

SEATED

Tom Beddow with Roger Beddow on his knee, and
Cecile Beddow

FRONT

Christine Beddow, Shirley Meachem,
Donald Beddow, Ronald Meachem, Joyce Beddow,
Pauline Meachem (Grand-children)

I left in 1919 to start work on the railways in Utttoxeter, moving to Ashbourne in 1920 for about two years. Later I went to Stoke-on-Trent where I met my wife Edith (nee Siddall) who comes from Tunstall. We married in 1926 and have been married for 65 years this year, 1991. We had two children - Gordon who is now 60, and Christine who died of Leukaemia at the age of 28.

Between 1962 and 1963 I was Lord Mayor of Stoke. One of my treasured possessions is an album of photographs taken by the Manager of the Checkley Outfall Station at the time of my retirement. I had been Chairman of the Committee there.

I am now 89 and my wife is 85. We have three grand-children and four great grand-children.



The Reading Room at Lower Tean - the single storey building on the right. It was built using bricks from Checkley Old School which used to be at the back of Beddow's house, (now Milner's)

My name is Kathleen Mary Meachem, nee Beddow. I lived in the cottage opposite Manor Farm in Checkley.

I first went to School in 1917 under a teacher called Mrs. Salt. In 1918 the three Whittingham sisters came to teach at Checkley School - Miss Mary Alice Whittingham became the Headmistress; Miss Elizabeth Whittingham was the second teacher and taught domestics. Every Wednesday she used to take the girls for housewifery, laundry and cooking. Miss Beatrice Whittingham, later to become Mrs. Doolan, taught the 5-7 year olds. All the years at school under the Misses Whittingham were happy ones. They even played games with us at times - marbles, tops and whips, skipping, bowlers (using a hoop and stick to keep the hoop rolling), rounders or tat, as we called it (hitting a ball with either your flat hand or your fist and running as they do in cricket). We also played basketball or netball and the boys played cricket in the field next to the School, where the Community Centre now stands. It was called the Cricket Field and was owned by Mr. Halden of Rectory Farm.

There was a pond in the field above the Cricket Field called The Marlows. In winter, when there had been heavy frosts, Mr. Halden would come to the School and tell the teacher that the ice was very thick and could be skated on and would give permission for us to use it. Then the Headteacher would take us in single file across the fields, carrying a rope - I expect in case of any accidents on the ice. It was great fun sliding on the ice.

My Father was Tom Beddow, Clerk, Verger, Gravedigger, Organist for the Sunday School and head Bell-ringer. He taught quite a few people the art of bell ringing over many, many years.

My Mother was caretaker of the Church for nearly forty years.

There were six bells at Checkley Church. No. 5 bell was used as the call bell for services. No. 6 bell was used for the passing of someone in the Parish. It was tolled every thirty seconds or so until the sound had faded away. This was done for about an hour. It was tolled again for the funeral. It was my Mother's job to ring these bells, and the Angelus bell each day at noon. This was also rung on No. 5 bell - three singles three times, followed by nine. On occasions when she was busy and could not be there I was allowed out of School two minutes before noon to ring the Angelus.

I remember the old road which goes down to Deadman's Green. Romany gypsies used to stay down there on occasions. My Father used to take me down to see the caravans. Sometimes we were invited inside; they were beautiful. If they were staying for a long period they sent their children to Checkley School for the while.

My Grandfather, Tom Beddow, was born at Penkhull. Later the family lived near Manchester and later still at The Anchor Inn, Upper Tean, where my brother Tom was born. My Grandfather's first wife died - I believe her maiden name was Blackford - my brother is named Thomas William Blackford Beddow.

Grandfather married again a woman named Prince when my brother was about 5 years old. His new wife was Roman Catholic and my Dad, Tom Beddow and his sister went to Monkhouse, a private Roman Catholic School in Cheadle. My Dad remained a Catholic until he met my Mother, Cecile Bailey, who was Church of England and he reverted to his original faith.

Grandfather Bailey came from Brosley in Shropshire and was a retired Royal Marine. Grandfather Tom Beddow was associated with Minton's, the Potteries people.

I believe that my grandparents, the Baileys, used to live at Wisbar House before they moved to the house next to the Church, only it wasn't known by that name then.

A recluse by the name of Lewis Barker lived at Wisbar House - so called by using the second syllable of Lewis and the first of Barker. I believe he was a retired sea captain. I never remember him working. As a child I was frightened of his appearance: he was tall with a beard and wore a skull cap, but worst of all he never spoke to anyone as he walked through the village.

My Mother made me go and see if he wanted any errands running. Once I got to know him I found him to be quite pleasant. He was as gentle as gentle can be. I remember selling him some scent cards at a penny each as part of a money-raising scheme for the School at Checkley. They were cards with a picture of a flower with a scent to match; Rose, Lily-of-the-Valley and Jasmine are a few of the names of scent cards that spring to mind.

Across the road going towards Manor Farm were two cottages; Mrs. Cope lived in one and the Barlows in the other. The Chells lived there after Mrs. Cope and Mrs. Oliver Fearn (nee Durose) came after the Barlows. A Mrs. Davies came after her.

I remember the names of a few landlords at the Red Lion over the years - Thorley, Hulme, Forrester, Prince, Scragg. The Stocktons lived in the cottage near the clocktower of the Church between the Red Lion and Moore's. My Mother told me that a curate by the name of Crawford used to lodge there at one time.

The Moore family lived opposite the Post Office at Ivy Cottage, Church Lane.

The first house in the row of terraced cottages next to Church Cottage used to be a coach house for the Philips family. Mrs. Pillans lived next door with her son. Next door lived an old couple called Mr. & Mrs. Warner and next to them lived Mrs. Phillips and her son Jim, who was a cowman for the Haldens of Rectory Farm.

In the end cottage by the main road lived Mrs. Fairbanks and in part of her house lived a Mr. & Mrs. Chell. Across the main road the Reeves family had a farm and lived at Hawthorn Cottage, facing down Church Lane. Soon after the second world war Mrs. Pillans had the coach house converted into a house for her son when he married Margaret Meredith.

Further along the main road, towards Uttoxeter, was The New Inn (now The New Broom). Mr. Pattinson was the landlord there for about 40 or 50 years. I believe his father was the landlord before him.



New Road, Checkley - past and present. Note the track of the newly-laid gas mains pipeline in the more recent photograph.

Mr. and Mrs. Evans lived opposite us at Manor Farm. When Grandfather Bailey died in 1915 I went to stay with Mrs. Evans for the day. I was 3 years old. Mr. and Mrs. Evans adopted a relation of theirs, Arthur Beardmore, who was the same age as me. When Mr. Evans died Manor Farm was sold. I don't know where Mrs. Evans moved to. I believe a family by the name of Shelley lived at Manor Farm, then the Allans and finally Joe Ede's Father bought it and his family have been there ever since.

Mrs. Heath lived at Bank Farm for years and years and she was followed there by Bert Rayson.



Wisbar House , Checkley

I left when I married in 1935 and when my husband was called up the week after the War started I returned to live there with my family for six years, 1939 - 1946. During the War I was a Postwoman, my area being Hollington, Tean, Lower Tean, Checkley and Deadman's Green. I used a cycle, of course.

We used to start at 5.30 a.m. at Tean to sort the mail. On occasions I used to deliver the post to the outlandish farms. I'd leave my bicycle at the bridge at Lower Tean and walk to Far Tean Leys Farm and Brittle Bank Farm. I'd volunteer to deliver the Christmas Day post as my husband Eric was away with the Forces.

Mrs. Hurst, who I knew as Aunt Lucy, lived with her Mother Mrs. Brough at Checkley Post Office where she also kept a shop.

I used to deliver a lot of telegrams during the War as so many people were away from home in the services. In those days ordinary people did not have a telephone and a telegram was the quickest way of sending news, good or bad.

Checkley is a very happy place to live in; one feels that everyone is related. I always wanted to come back after spending almost thirty years there.

I remember a motto we had:

Good, Better, Best
We will never let it rest
Until our Good is Better
And our Better Best.

My sister-in-law, Kath Beddow, still lives in Checkley. Her daughter, my niece Joyce James, who also lives in Checkley, has been the crossing lady there for nearly 20 years.

My name is Elsie May Vernon (nee Pattinson) and I was born at the New Inn (now the New Broom), Uttoxeter Road, Checkley on 16 August 1909. I was the eldest of four children. I had two sisters, Evelyn Mary and Kate, and a brother Arthur who was the youngest. Evelyn Mary was only 3 when she tragically lost her life. Her Uncle George, my Father's brother, was taking her for a ride in his horse and cart at the New Inn when the horse bolted. Evelyn was jolted out of the cart and fell under the wheel of the cart. I have only one memory of the tragedy and that is of my Uncle George sitting in a chair with his head in his hands. She died on 7 June 1915 and is buried in Checkley Churchyard.

My parents were Thomas and Ethel (nee Arnold). My Father was landlord of the New Inn, as his father was before him. There is a photograph taken about 1912 with my Aunt Kate Pattinson, my Mother and myself standing outside the pub.

I remember a plaque on the wall in the pub which had the following words:

" Some people you may money lend
But after that you'll find my friends
They'll seldom visit here. "

At the age of 5 I went to live with my Grandparents, Arthur and Martha Pattinson at the Green Farm, half a mile down the Uttoxeter Road, next to Shinglers.

I first went to school at Checkley School where I was taught by Miss Mary Whittingham. Harry Longridge of Fole and I were the first pupils from Checkley School to pass the 11+. When I was about 11 my Grandparents moved to Nobut where they had a small-holding. I went with them.



The New Inn, now The New Broom, Checkley
circa 1910 with, left to right, Miss Kate
Pattinson, Mrs. Ethel Pattinson (nee Arnold),
and little girl Elsie May Pattinson (later
Mrs. Vernon)



Tom Pattinson with stool and bucket ready to start milking at his small-holding at the New Inn, Checkley

I cycled to Uttoxeter Girls' High School every day. I took the School Certificate there and then went as a pupil-teacher to Leigh School where Mrs. Greenhill was the headmistress. The other teachers were Miss Mayne and Miss Brassington.

I remained there for about 2 years and then went as an uncertificated teacher at Mayfield School, near Ashbourne. I taught for 9 years and took the 7 year olds. Mr. Wright was headmaster at Mayfield School. The other teachers there in my time were Miss Pountain, Miss Woolley, Miss Hand and Miss Booth.

I used to cycle 5 miles to Spath where I caught a 'bus to Mayfield. I cycled in all weathers and never missed a day. Meanwhile I had returned to live with my parents at the New Inn. I married Frank Vernon from Fole Farm, Fole in December 1936 at Checkley Church. My class bought me a canteen of cutlery as a wedding present and because I was such a good time-keeper the staff bought me a clock. I've still got them.

We moved to Heybridge Farm, Lower Tean, where we lived for 42 years. Mr. and Mrs. Babbs lived at Heybridge Farm before us. In 1979 we came to live in Hilderstone. My husband died in 1985. We had no children.

I remember a postman named Mr. Hill. He was followed by Mr. Shingler. Dr. Brown was the local doctor and after him came Dr. Alan Wilson. In about 1919 the Old Bill Bus Service started running from Blythe Bridge.

They call me TAP, short for Thomas Arthur Pattinson. I was born at The New Inn, Checkley on 15 July 1922 - St. Swithin's Day. My Father Tom Pattinson, was landlord of The New Inn. He was also a roadman and swept the road from Tean to Fole. He had a barrow and broom, but in the winter months he borrowed a horse and cart from Percy Woolridge to grit the road and clear the snow. My Father also had a small-holding at the side of the pub and in the field opposite.

During the 1930's I used to go and get my hair cut by one of the Moore boys in Checkley. I served my time as an apprentice with a firm of builders, Beddows & O'Dair, with Harry Bostock who later married a Moore girl, Elsie May.

The Chauffeur for the Philips of Heybridge House, a Mr. Powell, used to live in The Gables where we now live. Before him Mrs. Ferneyhaugh lived here with her two sons, Joe and Harry. I believe they both lived in Australia for a time. Later, the Ferneyhaughs all went to live at the Lodge to Heybridge House.

I went to school at Checkley until I was 11. Miss Collier was my teacher, followed by Miss Whittingham, who was also head teacher. I then went to the Heath School, Uttoxeter.

I married Lydia Durose on 4 June 1949 at Leigh Church. My wife comes from Leigh. We have two daughters, Linda and Elaine.

SIGNALMAN'S DIARY

Postman picture revives memories

ONCE seen, the photograph of the white-bearded postman with his pony makes a lasting impression, so it was a natural choice as the cover picture for No 6 in our popular series *The Way We Were*.

The old photograph arrived via Forthbrook and Blythe Bridge Historical Society, whose members knew nothing about the postman, except that he was a local character who toured the rural districts around Tean nearly a century ago.

And his identity remained a mystery until he was recognised by 39-year-old Morton Thorley, who was a small boy when the village postman was near the end of his career.

Mr Thorley, still a resident of Tean, tells me that the man's name was Ferneyhough and he rode the pony in country lanes between Tean, Fole and Checkley before the First World War.

Apparently, Mr Ferneyhough was something of a joker. On one occasion he was untying his pony at Tean Post Office when a passer-by asked him if the animal was in foal. No, replied the postman, it wasn't in Fole, it was in Tean.

Besides the postman, Mr Thorley has clear memories of seeing hundreds of soldiers marching through Tean in August 1914 on their way to join regiments at Lichfield and Derby before embarking for France.

My thanks to Jim Foley, of Stafford, who put me in touch with Mr Thorley. Jim met him while carrying out research for a book he is writing



● The old Tean postman, whose identity has now been revealed. See 'Postman picture revives memories'

on the history of Checkley.

While on the subject of *The Way We Were*, a belated word of thanks to Ernest Warrillow, as we again drew on pictures from his collection for the latest edition.

Courtesy of John Abberley

Evening Sentinel

I was born on 19 January 1903 at The Wheatsheaf Inn in Lower Tean and named John Edward Morton Thorley. My Father, Samuel, was the landlord there. Shelleys, Coxes and Buntins were the names of some of the beers sold at the pub. Buntins had a brewery in Uttoxeter at the time.

When the Great War broke out soldiers passed through on their way to Lichfield. I have a photograph of a horse-drawn artillery piece passing the Wheatsheaf Inn in 1914. The soldiers stopped off for lunch in the field where the Checkley Cricket Ground now is.

The pub was closed by Buntins in December 1914 and my Father took over the tenancy of the Red Lion, Checkley. At the same time he became gardener and groom for the Rev. George Philips, the Rector at Checkley. The Wheatsheaf became a private dwelling and was eventually demolished.



An artillery piece passing the Wheatsheaf Inn, Lower Tean on its way to France, 1914.

We stayed at the Red Lion for twelve to fourteen years and then moved to Huntley, where my Father worked on the bank at the Foxfield Colliery.

I remember a postman, a Mr. Ferneyhaugh, who delivered the post in Lower Tean and Checkley and had a little pony to help him carry the mail. I remember he had a bulbous nose; how he got it I don't know, but it was as big as an orange. He lived in a house in Hall Green between Hall Green Farm and the house on the main road. He had a son who was a butcher.



The Red Lion, Checkley Circa 1916
with Samuel Thorley, landlord

Mr. & Mrs. Barrett ran the Dog & Partridge.
They were followed by Mr. Nye.
Mr. & Mrs. Nutt lived in the cottage next door
with their daughter who was married to a chap
named Storey. Bill Foden lived in the end
cottage. When I was a little lad Swinsons
kept Heybridge Farm. Later on came the Babbs
family. Mr. Campion was a cowman for them.
Arthur Moore was a farm labourer there. Later
on the Vernons took over the farm.
Mrs. Shenton lived in the cottage next to the
farm - Well End Cottage it was called.



Lower Tean with the Dog & Partridge Pub -
half the size it is today.

Photo courtesy Mr. & Mrs. Pattinson, Lower Tean



Samuel Thorley, groom at The Vicarage, Checkley



Photo courtesy of Mrs. Edna Milner of Wisbar House, Checkley, whose mother, Mrs. Lily Rayson (nee Alcock) was a barmaid at the pub.

My name is Joe Ede and I live at Manor Farm, Checkley with my wife, Joan (nee Pearce). I was born on 14 May 1917 at Tean Leys Farm, Lower Tean. My parents were James and Mary Elizabeth (nee Reeves). I have a younger brother, Charlie, who still lives at Tean Leys Farm. My great-grandfather, Joseph Henry Reeves, married Annie Hill whose great-grandparents came over from Holland to work as advisers at a weaving mill at Tean called Double Row. When the mill was shut down it was turned into flats. It was knocked down about ten years ago and there are houses for old people there now.

On the Ede's side my ancestors can be traced back to the Draycotts who are recorded from the time of the Normans. My Mother's family were the Reeves who had a farm at Hawthorn Cottage. My family told me that in the days of coaching it used to be a staging post where the horses were changed on the Derby to Newcastle Road. They said it was a half-way house. There used to be a stable on the Tean side of what is now called Hawthorn Cottage where the horses were kept.

My grandfather, Joseph Henry Reeves, bought Manor Farm from William Walters who was a farrier. He was renting the farm to a Mr. Evans. When my Father lived at Manor Farm he let the room above the forge to a Mr. Davis who lived there for about twenty years.

My Aunt Lillian Jane and her Father - my grandfather - Joseph Henry Reeves told me that the house next door - Manor House - used to be a school. Two of William Walters' spinster sisters used to teach there. They never married.



Manor Farm, Checkley

Manor House School was in the building on the left up the steps. The school was run by the Walters sisters.

There are unusual designs on some of the bricks near the front door of Manor Farm, Checkley. Mrs. Joan Ede told me that some time ago a visiting electrician noticed them and told her there was a house in Sudbury with similar designs on the brickwork. They could have been the trade marks of a local brick works.

My Father, James Ede, fought in the 1914-1918 War. He served in the North Staffordshire Regiment and was part of a flying column, an early version of the Commandoes. It's main task was raiding enemy lines to capture prisoners. On a number of occasions he and one other were the only two to return. On one raiding party a number of men from Hollington didn't return and it was only after the War that he found out they'd been taken prisoner - William Allen and a chap called Bellfield are the names of the two Hollington men he said were taken prisoner. Also from Hollington were the Turner lads, Jack and William. William got killed and Jack came home. My father became a sergeant but lost his stripes. He spent a lot of time with the Gurkhas towards the end.

When the War ended my Father worked for his brother, Harry Ede, who owned Waterloo Farm on the Uttoxeter Road near Stramshall. He then moved to Crab Tree Farm, a small farm again near Stramshall. One of his jobs was to carry buckets of milk using a yoke down to the main road as there was no road to the farm. Next he rented Manor Farm, Checkley. He also worked for the Council, mending the roads along with Mr. Pattinson from the New Inn. Mr. Pattinson was a length-man and had the section of the road from Fole to Teanhurst to maintain. Every Friday they went to Tean and swept the streets from one end to the other. Jack Fowler worked with them.

In about 1930 my Father rented Tean Leys Farm. I think it was around 1965 when my Aunt Lillian Reeves died that Hawthorn Cottage was sold.



William Reeves, Joe Ede's Great-Grandfather,
who lived at Hawthorn Cottage

Mrs. Brandrick now lives at Bank Farm and before that Bert Rayson and his wife lived there. Before him were the Swinsons - Mrs. Swinson was Heath by birth - and before them her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Heath. Mr. and Mrs. Heath had two sons who were gamekeepers and both were killed in the 1914-1918 War. Lewis Barker lived at Wisbar House. Between Wisbar House and Manor House are two cottages. The Copes lived in one and a Mr. Fern, who was a stoker on the railway, lived in the other.

I went to Checkley School where I was taught by Miss Whittingham. The other teachers were Miss Collier and Miss Horrobin. Later came Miss Stonehouse and Miss Hollins. Miss Hollins is still alive today and lives at Gratwich with her sister Marjorie.

I remember Willie Waugh's Spring at Lower Tean. Tean people used to come and collect the water-cress from there. The well is still there.

Mrs. Beddow has lived next door at Manor House for about 50 years. Before that a Mr. Snape, a policeman from Leigh and his wife lived there. A Mr. Smith lived there for a while.

I can remember a chap by the name of Timothy McLaughlin knocking down the Mill at Lower Tean. It was in a dangerous state.

I remember Joe Bamford riding a bike in Uttoxeter. There wasn't a J.C.B. in sight.

A Norwegian lecturer, Rolf Skarning, stopped off at Cheadle for a few days in 1975 during a lecture tour of English schools. He hoped to find some trace of his wife's ancestors - the Walters - who she believed came from the Cheadle area. Mr. Skarning called in at the Cheadle Rural District Council offices where, by sheer luck, he spoke to a recently retired local government officer and local historian, Joe Shaw. Joe Shaw was working there part-time in the rates office to occupy him until he was 65. Mr. Skarning couldn't have chosen a better person to speak to for Joe Shaw was able to show him the Wheatsheaf Hotel in Cheadle which his wife's ancestors, the Walters, managed. He took Mr. Skarning to the graveyard at Checkley where he was able to see the Walters headstones.

When Mr. Skarning returned to Norway Joe promised to continue the search on his behalf. Mr. Shaw, with the help of his nephew Richard Hurst, discovered that the Walters family owned quite a lot of land in Checkley and were, with the Philips family, one of the largest landowners in the parish. The pedigree that Joe Shaw so painstakingly researched shows that the branches of the Walters family extended from Checkley to Croxden, Great Gate, Hollington, Cheadle, Caverswall and Cookshill.

Thomas Walter - the 's' was added later - was born in Checkley in 1666 - the same year as the Great Fire of London. He was a blacksmith and many of his male descendants would follow the same trade in Checkley, Hollington, Great Gate and surrounding villages.

In the course of his research Joe found out from Joe Ede of Manor Farm, Checkley, about Manor House School which was run by the ladies of the Walters family.

Mr. Shaw unearthed the following interesting advertisement in a copy of the Staffordshire Advertiser for 1804:

"Mrs. Walters of Checkley respectfully informs her friends and the public that the school was re-opened on July 18th. Terms for board and tuition 16 guineas per year and 1 guinea entrance. Washing 10s.6d. per quarter Writing 10s.6d. per quarter Proper Masters will be employed for all other accomplishments."

Proper Masters indeed must have been employed for the teaching of music. Joe Shaw has in his possession a wonderful collection of five very old pupils' music books from the Manor House School next to Manor Farm, Checkley. They were given to him by a descendant of the Walters family in appreciation of his intensive research of the Walters Family Tree and the pedigree which he supplied to them. These music books would have been passed on to succeeding generations of the Walters family for over 200 years. There are some interesting inscriptions in the books:

Thomas Walters
His Music Book
Checkley Jan. 21st 1788

and

Steal not this book
for fear of shame
For there you may see
the Hohners name

Music was obviously an important element of the curriculum at Manor House School 200 years ago.

Joe Shaw and his wife Kath (nee Hurst) have also produced a family tree for the Hurst/Bullock families tracing an unbroken male line in both surnames over nearly 400 years. Both families lived in the Cheadle area and the surnames, like that of the Shaw family, are of Anglo-Saxon origin.

With great foresight Joe has, over the years, taken photographs of buildings in Cheadle town which he felt were under threat. Many of these buildings are now gone.



Manor House School girls

Photo courtesy Mrs. Joan Ede

I was born Kathleen Mary Halden at Rectory Farm, Checkley in 1916. My parents were John Halden and Sarah Ann (nee Dale). I understand Rectory Farm to have been part of the Abbey at Croxden in the Middle Ages. Legend has it that a tunnel links Rectory Farm with the Church at Checkley and the Abbey at Croxden. There was a lot of wooden panelling at Rectory Farm and it was believed there was a secret staircase leading to the tunnel. We never found it. -

My Father bought Rectory Farm from the Rev. George Philips, who died so tragically not long afterwards. I can remember his daughter Penny, who was about my age. He was followed by the Rev. Drinkwater.

There were two very small rooms in the attic at Rectory Farm - hearsay had it that wrongdoers from the village were detained there. Upstairs there was a room overlooking the river whose walls were covered in oak panelling; there was a pattern done in gold leaf on each panel. The room was supposed to have been a chapel with an altar where the fireplace was. Around that fireplace there used to be blue and white tiles with scenes from the Bible on them. Later on I believe they were given to the Catholic Church at Cheadle. The only other place where I've seen tiles like them was at Field House, Marchington where Mrs. Snow lived. It had the same sort of grate with the same sort of blue and white tiles.

There were shutters on the windows which fitted into the walls and matched the panelling. At the bottom of each window were oak seats which lifted up and had a space underneath. Downstairs there used to be a glass door with a wooden surround connecting two rooms. Various signatures were deeply etched in the glass and



Rectory Farm, Checkley



The Dovecot or Watch Tower, Rectory Farm

although the glass was very thick we had to be very careful that the door didn't slam. The top of the door was rounded like a church door and there were two other doors of similar shape.

The drawing room walls were all oak-lined.

In well to do families with more than one son it was the tradition that one son went into the army and one into the Church and so Rev. George Philips became Rector of Checkley. He and my father became friends. They played bridge, chess and draughts together on winter nights. At one time the rent of Rectory Farm was the living of the Rector. Before us Shoebothams rented Rectory Farm and the rent they paid to the Church would have been the 'salary' of the Rector of Checkley Church. The Shoebothams were marvellous gardeners and did wonders with the gardens and lawns and they greatly improved the orchard.

Lewis Barker, who lived near Rectory Farm, was a friend of my father's for a time. He, too, used to play chess, draughts and bridge with my father on winter nights for in those days there was no television or radio. Mrs. Barker was a very beautiful woman. I believe she was friendly with my mother and played the piano at our house. Mr. Barker was temperamental. We used to tease him by taking apples from his apple trees.

Another friend of my father was Gerard Aynsley - one of the Aynsleys, the pottery family. He used to come and stay with us to fish and hunt. Mr. Stockton who lived in the cottage opposite the clock tower of the Church was also a friend.

The building which looks like a dovecot near the main gate to Rectory Farm we knew as the Watch Tower. Four stained-glass windows were supposed to have been removed from it and put in Checkley Church. Originally there were two staircases at the farm, both done in the same pattern. One of these was removed and made into altar rails for the Church. I can remember kneeling for Communion and recognising the pattern - exactly the same as the one on the front stairs at the farm.

There was an old house on the other side of the River Tean built with oak timbers supposed to have come from a ship. I can never remember anybody living in it. The Avrils lived at Checkley Bank Farm.

There was an ornamental waterfall behind the house on the brook - the River Tean. There was a ford near the farm and at one time that was the only way to get to Checkley Bank.

Checkley Post Office used to sell picture postcards of Checkley Church and Rectory Farm.

The postcard of Rectory Farm showed a mounting block for equestrians at the side of the farmhouse.

I can remember a moat round Rectory Farm and I believe there was supposed to be a drawbridge.

My Father had a lot of horses and used to enter them in the Horse Shows. He often travelled to London and usually brought back a gramophone record of the latest craze in music. There was no radio or television in those days and my Father was fond of music. We had a very big room at Rectory Farm with a polished oak floor where we had little dances for family and friends. The hall held up to 50 people and a few family receptions were held there.

When I was a girl the landlord of the Red Lion was Mr. Hulme. Mr. Pattinson, a waggoner for my Father, was the landlord of The New Inn, now called The New Broom. His daughter, Mrs. Vernon, lived at Heybridge Farm. Our head cowman was Jim Phillips who lived with his Mother next to the coach-house, opposite the Post Office in Church Lane. Mrs. Phillips used to do mending for my Mother.

Her other son, Jack Phillips, was a hedger and digger for my Father. Another brother, George, was a waggoner along with Mr. Pattinson for my Father.

A gamekeeper for the Philips family, Mr. Heath and his wife lived at the house at the top of our lane - now called Bank Farm. Two of their sons were killed in the First World War. I believe they were snipers.

I went to school at Checkley School, as did my younger sister Marjorie. My teacher was Miss Beatrice Whittingham and her sister was the Headmistress.

When my Father died he left the farm to my brother, Charles Halden, who was married to Jean. In 1985 he sold it to the Salts who now live there.

I married in 1935 and went to live at Crakemarsh near Uttoxeter.

My name is Norman Percival Halden and I lived at Rectory Farm, Checkley. I knew Lewis Barker who lived in the cottage at the top of the lane from our home. It was said that he had been a butler. He spoke like someone who had been dealing with refined people and when he went out he dressed like a butler might dress. He kept himself to himself and seemed to be well bred. He had a lady friend who lived with him.

I was born at Rectory Farm in 1914 and stayed there until 1938. My Father died in 1950 and the farm was left to my brother Charlie.

The Avrils lived across the brook in the farm which was owned by the Philips of Heybridge.

We all went to School at Checkley. The Misses Whittingham were teachers there at the time. Mr. Drinkwater was the Rector.

My Father bought Rectory Farm from the Church Commissioners in about 1913. The farm itself consisted of about 130 acres.

The Haldens originally came from Milwich where my Grandfather was a butcher.



A medieval fire-place at Rectory Farm with Laura Foley aged 10 in front.

My name is Margaret Philips. Although my father's name was Elletson - an old Lancashire family - my mother was a Philips and so I'm a Philips by blood and by marriage.

I have lived at Heath House, Lower Tean since 1935 when I married Anthony Burton Capel Philips. My husband died in 1982. We had two children - John Anthony Burton Philips, who I am told is still Lord of the Manor of Checkley, and Madeline Young. John lives in Worcestershire and Madeline lives in Essex. I have five grandchildren.

There is a Philips Family Tree at Heath House and recently a cousin of mine, Michael Philips, has produced an addition to that which shows that the Philips were husbandmen in the area around 1400. Some branches of the family go further back.

The Philips family went on through hard work, good marriages and some luck to become the major employers of the area with the tape mill at Tean and landowners of many farms and houses round about.

The mill at Tean was sold after the second World War and is no longer in the Philips family. Over the years various farms and properties were sold off to the people renting them.

Three members of the Philips family were Rectors at Checkley - my grandfather, Edward Philips, and my uncles George Philips and lastly Ralph Oswald Philips.

During the War Heath House was used as a Red Cross Convalescent Hospital for soldiers. It has also been used as the location for two films - one on B.B.C. and the other on Granada. The house was in a sorry state due to dry rot so the money came in very useful to restore the property.

Although I've recently relinquished some of my public duties, in my time I've been a J.P. and Chairman of the Bench at Cheadle; Chairman of the School Governors at Greatwood School, Upper Tean; President of the W.I; Patron of Checkley Church and member of Checkley Parish Council Committee.

For the past thirty years I've arranged the flowers for Sunday service at Checkley Church.

At Heath House I restored the Orangery and as a result received a citation from the Council for the Protection of Rural England.

James Stephen Walker has been butler here at Heath House for forty years.

Miss Kathleen Hollins was Headmistress of Checkley School from 1946 to 1972 when she retired. Miss Hollins was born near Leigh in 1909. Her parents, Samuel and Elizabeth (nee Wright) Hollins were farmers at Dods Leigh Cottage Farm. Miss Hollins had three brothers Freer, Geoffrey and Stanley and one sister, Marjorie.

In 1946 she was appointed as Headmistress of Checkley School. She lived with her sister Marjorie in the School House which was situated in the school grounds. Since Miss Hollins' retirement it has been demolished.

The following is Miss Hollins' story of her time at Checkley School.

MISS HOLLINS REMEMBERS

Checkley then was almost totally agricultural - a village that completely changed while I was there. There were families that had lived there for at least a lifetime - Philips, Copes, Reeves, Raysons, Baileys, Swinsons, Vernons. There was a squire, Mr. Humphrey Philips, at Heybridge, Lower Tean and Mr. Anthony Philips at Heath House overlooking Lower Tean and Checkley. Both had large estates. Heybridge covered some of Lower Tean, Checkley and most of Leigh. Heath House covered parts of Checkley, Tean and as far away as Freehay. Heath House was used as a Red Cross Hospital during the Second World War with Mrs. Humphrey Philips as Commandant.

The Rector of Checkley was the Rev. W. Drinkwater almost at the end of a very long incumbency. He was a perfect gentleman. When he could no longer walk and he was pushed in a wheelchair he never failed to raise his hat to a parishioner, though he could hardly hold it. He employed a Curate, Mr. Godfrey, when he was unable to cope with the parish. Rev. Drinkwater had married Miss Cooper, Head Teacher of Uttoxeter Girls' High School a short time before I was appointed. They both took the greatest interest in anything connected with the well-being of the School and helped whenever possible.

There were still a few people using the footpath to Leigh village and station but as there was now a 'bus service on the A50 there were many fewer than I remembered as a child. Then there was a steady trickle of walkers past the farm where my parents lived. Incidentally, the views from Checkley Bank on that footpath were, in my opinion, some of the most beautiful in North Staffordshire. Unfortunately that view is now gone - bisected by the Uttoxeter to Blythe Bridge motorway - a new section of the A50.

Before the by-pass was built the A50 through Checkley was a nightmare for teachers at Checkley School. When I saw the traffic I refused the post as I considered it too dangerous to accept the responsibility for the safety of the children, but Mrs. Drinkwater persuaded me to accept by telling me that a new road was planned to run across the top of Mr. Ede's orchard to come into use three years later. It was told to me in good faith, but the road arrived 30 years later on the other side of the valley after I had left.

The school was delightful, the children being very friendly and pleasant and the atmosphere very obvious to a complete stranger. The parents could not have been more helpful nor co-operative. Coming from Birmingham, hard hit by rationing, I was impressed by the rosy cheeks of Checkley children who had fared better.

The school buildings had been badly neglected and had not been re-decorated during the war nor improved since it was built in 1879. There were two wash hand basins - one in the kitchen and the other in a shed. The lavatories were across the yard and were ordinary buckets emptied by Cheadle Council once a month. I felt I had achieved something when I succeeded in persuading the authority that Elsans would be more hygienic. There were three lavatories on the girls side, one for infants, one for the girls, one for teachers, and two for the boys with a urinal.

There were two classrooms, a kitchen (the school was used by the parish for social functions), a passage used as a cloakroom for older children and a tiny built-on cloakroom for infants at the end of the building. Heating was by open fires, one in each room. Coal was stored in a shed behind the building and was delivered when needed by horse and cart and later by motor lorries.

There were many incidents with the coal. A young man delivered the coal and one day a little girl said, "He is a very kind young man. Whenever he comes to school he drops off four or five bags for my granny who is very poor."

There was a staff of four at the school; a teacher, Miss Collier, a cleaner, Mrs. Fairbanks, a newly appointed school meals helper, Mrs. Robertson and me. We had 66 children. A happier, more hard working group of people it would have been difficult to find. The four staff carried on for some years, never complaining about being overworked. Miss Collier was a pure genius as an infant teacher and the children adored her. She was very quiet yet discipline was excellent. If two children were about to quarrel she would say, "Not Tony and Graham! I always think you are the best of friends. Now hold hands, walk all round the playground and when you get back come and tell me you are good friends again." It never failed. Her teaching was excellent. All children read by seven years of age and could work four rules in arithmetic.

Mrs. Fairbanks had cleaned the school for years and took great pride in her work. The school was spotless. Her husband, a miner, suffered from coal dust infections; he tried to work as a gardener but gradually became a helpless invalid with tiny financial payments. They were very poor but she never complained and although aged around 70 was always bright and cheerful. I once caught her cleaning a tiled passage floor on her hands and knees and told her she must use a mop. She told me when she could not clean properly she would give up and since helpers were extremely difficult to find the scrubbing on hands and knees continued. She was paid 15 shillings a week.



Presentation to Mrs. Fairbanks on her retirement after 60 years as Cleaner/Caretaker at Checkley School.

L. to R: Rev. Ralph Philips, Mrs. Doris Philips, Mrs. Fairbanks, Mrs. Joan Ede (School Governor)

Photo courtesy Mrs. Joan Ede

Miss Hollins with Checkley School Governor Mrs. Joan Ede had a battle with the County Council to get them to give Mrs. Fairbanks a pension. After many letters, telephone calls and visits to Stafford, Mrs. Fairbanks was finally awarded a pension of 10/- per week.

Mrs. Robertson, in charge of school meals, also had a husband who suffered from a mining induced illness. She, too, did an excellent job. The meals were delivered daily in heated containers and which she served up so attractively. Everything was spotlessly clean and the children really appreciated their meals. She later married again and became Mrs. Moore. She now lives in Uttoxeter.

There were several old ladies living in the village and they had memories going back to the beginning of this century and before.

Mrs. Hurst kept the Post Office. She had been left a widow with two small boys and no income so had to get work at Heybridge in order to live. She was paid 2/6d. a week for working in the laundry from early morning until late afternoon. She was also given left-overs from the kitchens and told me how grateful she was after a party, especially for a bag of crusts which lasted some days.

Mrs. Reeves, Joe Ede's grandmother who lived at Hawthorn House, Checkley, liked discussing the old days and was interested in old lanes and footpaths and deplored the fact that so many had fallen into disuse. One she described was the coal road, a lane which ran from Cheadle, through Freehay up to Heath House fields from Hollington Level, straight down into the old lane which ran between the farms on the hill into a lane which ended by Mrs. Reeves' house. This road can still be followed easily and in Goldhurst fields road markings can still be seen in a large stone post. She said after crossing the Tean to Fole road the lane continued through the churchyard by the Rectory hedge, through the crossing of the paths and coming out by the present gate by the cottage.

It went to Leigh via the lane by Rectory Farm, through the river to the old lane which still exists into Leigh - as a bridle road which I think is closed now with the building of the A50 by-pass road. This would have been a blow to Mr. Barker who lived at the crossroads and kept a horse and trap so that he could drive to Leigh to keep it open at least once a year. He was successful and the bridleway remained until the motorway was built. The lane through the churchyard was filled in when the churchyard was extended and the New Road was built, hence its name.

Mrs. Beddow also had much to tell of the old days. She lived in the little white cottage in the churchyard. She had cleaned the old school before the present one was built. It stood in the corner of the churchyard and its boundaries were very clear when I first saw it. The building was small but pleasant and she used to take washing to dry at night, with the approval of the authorities.

Mrs. Fairbanks also knew a great deal about Checkley and especially about Leigh and the people and parishes, and her sister Mrs. Chell who lived next door could help.

The transport cafe known as the Road House was a single storey building which was extended several times and became a very busy and prosperous business. The coming of the A50 motorway ended its prosperity and although other attempts were made to make it profitable it was finally closed, demolished and the site is now being sold for house building.

Fole Dairy had much smaller premises in 1946. Much of the milk processed there was delivered by the farmers by horse and cart but some was collected by lorry.

The Mill had been a flour mill and still has the water wheel fed by the river Tean behind the building. The Mill had been there for a long time. My father as a boy had broken a leg swinging on the back of one of the horse drawn lorries which carried flour for transport from Leigh Station all over the country. The flour was sold under the trade-name Millenium and I believe it is still available. The firm moved to Liverpool once cheap Canadian wheat was imported and home grown corn was no longer profitable. The Vernon family who had installed the organ in Checkley Church went with the firm.

The biggest change in my time in Checkley was the coming of the sewer site. The avenue and large house bought as part of the site were occupied by the Greensmith brothers, noted for their careful ways. I once walked behind them in Uttoxeter. They stopped. One said to the other, "Do you think we might buy a paper?" Long pause as we all walked several yards. "Oh", said his brother after considering, "I reckon we might". They were reputedly very wealthy.

When the school building was being modernised a class used the sewer site canteen as a classroom, a most popular arrangement with the children who went. Six houses were built down one side of the avenue to provide homes for some of the workers.

This was followed by the building of the Wimpey estate at Lower Tean. Three hundred houses were built and when occupied children from the estate made a big impact on the school. They came from all over the world, especially Hong Kong. Many of the parents had been in the services and most had lived in towns.

The two types of children, country and town, mixed remarkably well and friendships developed from the start, but teaching them was most difficult and many were retarded by Checkley standards. The newcomers had little in common coming from such different backgrounds and experiences. Many had had difficult times during the war and had had their education seriously disrupted. Classes had to be re-arranged in groups according to attainment. Some classes had very big age ranges; several classes were purely remedial. We were fortunate in being given two very experienced retired infants' teachers on a half-time basis. The stage was brought into use as a classroom and Mrs. Wilson taught there in the mornings, Mrs. Morris in the afternoons. They had classes for the non-readers and backward of the new admissions, who came trickling in for months. Some were highly intelligent and learnt to read well in a few weeks. In fact, one boy admitted in September as a non-reader passed the 11+ the following Spring. The parents were most helpful.

Checkley Cricket Club and the school were greatly indebted to Mr. Pigden, a retired teacher from Birmingham. We were allowed to use the Cricket Field by the Club for games periods. Mr. Pigden was intensely interested in cricket and was waiting on the field whenever the boys arrived for games having offered to coach them for cricket. He was undoubtedly a perfectionist and would not overlook the smallest fault. He would pin a 2" square of white paper on the pitch and the boys had to bowl to hit that spot, while he was equally particular about the niceties in the use of the cricket bat. A few years later Checkley Cricket Team were highly successful and the team were mostly the boys Mr. Pigden had coached with such care.



Photo courtesy Mr. & Mrs. Pattinson, Lower Tean

BACK ROW L. to R.

Kate Rogers, Mrs. Fearn, Joan Akrill,
 Mrs. Sutherland, Sid Beddows, Mrs. Beddows
 Rev. Drinkwater, Walter Bailey (Beamhurst),
 Annie Frost, Harold Bolton (Organist),
 Mrs. Bolton, Fred Faulkener, Nellie Ferneyhaugh,
 Mrs. Davies, Nellie Davies

SEATED:

Miss Mabel Collier, Mrs. Potter, Mrs. Philips
 (Heath House), Rev. Bridgewood (Forsbrook),
 Mrs. Ferneyhaugh, Miss Whittingham

FRONT:

Mark and Michael Philips

A large garage and petrol station in the village added to its amenities. It was owned by two local men, Messrs. Barker and Shenton, who were very generous to the school in lending their premises and helping the school in any way they could.

The premises were large and were lent for school plays, bazaars and other money-raising efforts. Later on the Church Council used them very successfully. It was a loss to the village when they decided to move their business.

Other businesses started up but none were successful and eventually the garage was demolished and the Cranberry estate enlarged by using the site.

The Reading Room at Lower Tean was used for various activities. Mrs. Morton Philips told me it had been built on the Heybridge Estate to provide a soup kitchen for the use of the poor of Lower Tean and Checkley and they supplied the soup. Later it became the Reading Room. Mrs. Philips owned the piano and gave it to the school.

After the death of the Rev. Wm. Drinkwater the Rev. R. Philips was appointed as Rector. He belonged to the branch of the family that had lived in Hollington where his father was Rector along with the parishes of Checkley, Tean and Foxt to each of which he appointed curates. The Rev. Ralph Philips was the youngest of the 13 children and he and his wife had seen violent happenings during the Blitz in London during the second War. He was a scholar and never forgot any book he had read and could discuss it at any time. They were individuals in their life style. Once he told me he was skint and wanted to go on holiday but couldn't afford to. A few days later he said they were going. An antiques dealer had called at the Rectory when the Rector

had said they had no antiques but that their attics were full of old rubbish. The dealer had cleared the lot for £60. "He was such a nice man and we can now go on holiday." I could not help thinking he must have had several items worth £60. When they left the back door was standing wide open and several people had been told to go in and get what they required.

Checkley's ghost was well known. I was at a Church meeting in an upstairs room at the Rectory - now the nursing home - when suddenly there were noises on the landing and knocking on the door. "It's all right, dear", said the Rector, Rev. Ralph Philips. "We are just having a meeting". The noise stopped and one of the men present opened the door; there was no one there and the landing and stairs were empty.

There was definitely something queer about the ghost. I met Miss Stonehouse, a previous head teacher at Hutchinson Memorial School. She asked, "Have you seen the ghost?" "What ghost?" was my reply. "Mrs. Hutchinson", she said. She went on to say that one summer afternoon, after school, she walked across the churchyard going to the Rectory. She met an old lady dressed in a black cloak and white lace collar and wearing a bonnet. She just smiled and went on. Miss Stonehouse went on, thinking no more about it until she went into the Rector's study and on the wall was a small framed sketch of the old lady. She asked whose photograph it was. "Oh", said the Rector, "It was the wife of the last Rector but she has been dead some years now". "Well, I've just met her in the churchyard a few minutes ago", said Miss Stonehouse.



Checkley village viewed from Checkley Bank
 Photo courtesy the late Bert Rayson



The Old Vicarage, Checkley -
 Mrs. Hutchinson's favourite haunting ground

Although most sceptical I must admit I had a queer experience which I could never explain. It was after school and late twilight. I thought Mrs. Fairbanks was cleaning as I finished some marking. I picked up some books ready to go and as I went out of the room I noticed how dark it was getting in the corridor so I went back and switched on the light in the classroom. To my surprise Mrs. Fairbanks was not there so I was puzzled but thought she had gone elsewhere. However, since there was no light on, I glanced into the other rooms and since she was not there concluded she was working outside and went home. Next morning Mrs. Fairbanks came and apologised for not coming the previous night but her husband had had a bad asthma attack and she could not leave him. I wondered who it had been in the alcove to the classroom.

Mr. Ede's orchard behind the school was a favourite playfield for the children and Mr. & Mrs. Ede were most generous in allowing them to use it and giving them fruit. Mr. Ede would meet a group of them and ask, "Do any of you children like pears?" Their reply was an emphatic "Yes". "Well, bring some bags tomorrow" and next day they followed him round the orchard, a replica Pied Piper. He would shake the trees and down would come the fruit to the great delight of the children. A very beautiful elm tree growing in his hedge was blown down in a storm. Timber merchants made it safe and placed the small boughs across the field, the bigger ones on a pile and the enormous trunk separately about 30 yards into the field. The timber merchants offered Mr. Ede £60 for the trunk and agreed to collect it the following Monday, but that week the children played on it and Mr. Ede watching said, "Aren't they a pretty sight?" The trunk was never collected, to the children's great delight and the pleasure given to them was incalculable.

The Rectory Farm then owned by the Halden family was said to be the oldest house and buildings in Checkley. It had a beautiful panelled room known as the Monk's room from Monks who had visited from Croxden Abbey before they had a priest at Checkley. The path they were said to have used is still in use going past High Ridges Farm, through Hollington to Croxden.

Oliver Cromwell was said to have watched a battle at Deadman's Green from a tower at Rectory Farm but there is no proof and the Church tower, to me, would have been a more suitable site.

The Church has been well described as a history book in stone. I believe full accounts of it have already been written but I think a would-be historian should ascertain the facts before committing them as such to paper. An H.M.I. once asked me to take him to view the Church. I showed him the well-known historical pieces and after examining them I showed him the various mass dials on the south wall. "This is all very interesting", he said, "but how much can you prove?"

Equally disconcerting was a sermon by the Rector on Medieval life and services. "After mass on Sundays the men would assemble in front of the Church for archery practice. Bows would be made from the old yew trees still standing there." That very week I was visiting Mrs. Ede and she showed me some old photographs of Checkley taken around the beginning of this century. One was of the churchyard and across to the Church. I was surprised to see the old yew trees were missing and bushes were growing in their place.



St. Mary and All Saints', Checkley.



Photos courtesy Mrs. Joan Ede

I suppose the Sewage Site might have brought the biggest change in Checkley while I was there. I remember our attendance officer saying, when work on the site started, "We can say goodbye to the Checkley we have known. Once the sewers are laid the changes will come. The authorities will have to make maximum use of the new facilities and the nearer the works, the bigger the help. Houses will spring up here and the district around Checkley will become a dormitory area with few people working locally but many in the nearby towns".

One of the outstanding occasions at the school was a visit from the Lord Mayor of Stoke-on-Trent wearing full regalia. Alderman Tom Beddow had attended Checkley School and recalled his days there with pleasure. He presented the school with a framed photograph of himself in his full regalia as Lord Mayor. His mother was able to attend, very proud of her son's achievements, as were parishioners who had known him. Two of the children presented a book of photographs of Checkley to him.

The A50 road became more and more dangerous over the years. Miss Collier often spoke of the changes she had seen. As a child she had often bowled a hoop from Tean to Checkley, only meeting a cart occasionally. An inspector who came to school noticed the unusual phasing in the morning assembly and later realised I was fitting it in with traffic lulls. I was so used to the noise I no longer realised that had to be done.

Getting the children across the road was a very difficult job for teachers each morning and afternoon. In the early days there were no traffic wardens and sometimes we would have to wait for five minutes or more before we could manage it.

The children were most co-operative and helpful and people often commented on their excellence in coping and following instructions implicitly. They were never allowed to cross the road unless accompanied by a teacher, nor to go through the school gate by themselves. It became so difficult on Uttoxeter Race Days that I had to ask for Police help and ultimately we were given a warden.

Traffic accidents often upset the children, especially when people were hurt or killed. Once, knowing the school 'bus had been diverted I went to meet it and to walk the children along the pavement. On my way amid a great deal of confusion I saw a crumpled tarpaulin in the road and sticking out of the side a hand, and such a well-shaped, capable hand. To me it deepened the tragedy. When the 'bus arrived the driver told me he had been instructed by the police to drive round the village. The children were put down by the Church and had to be taken across the churchyard to the school gate, very subdued and concerned.

There were other fatal accidents. Once, late at night, some young men had offered some girls a lift in their car from Longton to Tean. They did not stop in Tean but carried on to Uttoxeter at a speed which frightened the girls. They went right round the New Road roundabout and straight back through Beamhurst and Fole. When they reached the school house in Checkley one of the girls grabbed the steering wheel and threw the car out of control. It skidded across the road and went over the hedge. The girls came to my house seeking help. One boy had been killed outright, one was badly hurt and the girls were all badly shaken and frightened. We did what we could to help, the police took statements, then took the girls home. A few days later they came back to thank us for the help we had given.

Two cars came over the school hedge and a lorry over the school house hedge, luckily all without any injury to anyone, while several cars were damaged by vehicles being pushed into one another outside the school gates and fence. Some were stationary, putting down children or picking them up. It must have been a great weight lifted from the Checkley community when the new motorway was finally opened taking most of the traffic from the road by the school and returning Checkley to its previous status as a quiet country village.

By 1957 things had become very difficult at school. Miss Collier wanted to retire; there were 64 children on roll taught by two teachers. When Miss Collier was absent due to the death of her sister I had all 64 - it was usually impossible to find a temporary teacher. I put the infants into 4 groups of eight and arranged for 4 of the most senior children to each teach a group. Part of the day I set the juniors to work in charge of one child who had to report to me if any difficulty arose while I taught the infants. Mr. Taylor, deputy Director of Education, called one afternoon and went into the junior room which had a child in charge. He was most impressed and said the child was so capable and the children responded so well he felt a supply teacher would be superfluous and he knew several teachers not as competent as that child. The Authority was in great difficulty finding supply teachers and he was sending round to married ex-teachers hoping to recruit a few.

On 7 May Mrs. Hilditch arrived but said her husband had only agreed for her to teach one day. She had been an art teacher in a senior school but immediately plunged in to teach the infants with great success. I begged her to stay, at any rate until Miss Collier returned.

She evidently persuaded her husband and turned up next morning ready for work and stayed for 16 years! She proved to be one of the most gifted teachers I had ever known: art, music, dancing, swimming or 3R work she taught equally successfully.

When Miss Collier returned I had already been told by the Authority that I could retain Mrs. Hilditch as her husband would not agree for her to teach elsewhere and at the next Managers' Meeting she was made a permanent member of staff. She was appointed Deputy Head Teacher in 1969 and resigned in 1973 on appointment as Head Teacher at Denstone J.M. School. So having agreed to come for one day in 1957 she stayed until 1973, to the great benefit of the school.

During this time the number of children on roll increased up to 110 and there were several short-term teachers appointed. Miss Callister took Mrs. Hilditch's place. Another competent teacher, who is still there now, is Mrs. Harvey. We really were a most fortunate school as regards staffing. Non-teaching staff were equally efficient; both Mr. and Mrs. W. Stewart were parents who helped the school whenever they could. Mr. Stewart was in the Navy at the end of the war and was expert in ropes, knots and fixing things as well as climbing and ladders and reaching apparently inaccessible places and as we were a female staff we were really grateful for his help.

Mrs. Stewart was always ready to help when we were in staffing difficulties no matter what the job and when a school welfare assistant post was to be established she was appointed to the post, which was mostly caring for infants but also with older children when needed. In the infant room she soon became familiar with the teaching of reading, English and numbers, and soon was as capable as a trained teacher and any spare time

she had she would help with reading etc. She was very popular with the children and won the confidence of the shyest and most timid of infants with her pleasant, motherly manner. She had been Welsh speaking until in her teens, which proved a real asset when three Welsh children from Blaenau-Ffestiniog were admitted, unable to speak English. Mrs. Stewart took them and in a few weeks they were speaking English. It also proved useful at other times, notably for the Investiture of The Prince of Wales, when she taught everyone Welsh songs.

The secretaries were other very efficient helpers, first Mrs. Walker then Mrs. Brandrick gave years of very useful service to the school most willingly.

The School Meals staff provided most satisfactory meals which the children and staff really enjoyed. First Mrs. Harrison, followed by Mrs. Preussner were the cooks and Mrs. Coulton the chief assistant. Mrs. Preussner, a farmer's daughter, who retired in 1991, always provided a truly nourishing meal as did Mrs. Harrison, also a gifted cook.

Mrs. Fairbanks, Mrs. Hawley and Mrs. Richards were the main caretakers and gave valuable service and kept the school so well that many visitors commented on its cleanliness. One inspector said, "These are the most important people on a school staff and have a big influence on the life of the whole school. A clean and tidy building and surroundings inspires all."

In all my years of teaching I never came across anywhere like Checkley for the friendliness of the parents and the community, the co-operative and helpful children and the excellent hard-working staff - teachers, caretakers, cooks, helpers and ancillaries. Checkley will always be special.



Rev. Graham Fowell (Curate) with his wife Isobel and daughter Lucy. Summer 1990.

Father Graham Fowell arrived in Checkley in April 1986 as Priest-in-Charge with his wife Isobel. Their daughter, Lucy, was born in December of that year. Father Graham, as his parishioners called him, was ordained at Lichfield in 1982. He then became curate at St. James the Great, Clayton. Checkley was his first parish.

Father Graham had no idea that the Church of St. Mary and All Saints was in such urgent need of restoration. Through various fund-raising events, with the help of his parishioners and an enthusiastic fund-raising Committee and a grant from British Heritage, £80,000 was raised in 3½ years.

A variety of musical events and concerts were arranged to help raise funds and the Church got quite a reputation for fine music. The Llandulas Male Voice Choir paid three visits. Isobel Fowell played her part and her musical talents brought delight to these events.

A Flower Festival was started and one was held every two years, along with the popular street market in Church Lane.

Father Graham was responsible for initiating a number of activities in the parish: a Mother's Union Branch was started and is now flourishing; a Luncheon Club for the elderly which met at first in the Red Lion Pub, but later moved to Checkley Cricket Club; Saints Alive for children 7 - 12 years; a Youth Group for teenagers; an Annual Pilgrimage to Walsingham, usually in May or June; Prayer Cells where people met in each others homes; a village Craft Display in the Church, and the Palm Sunday Procession from the Community Centre to the Church.

There is an old Checkley tradition that on Shrove Tuesday at 11 a.m. the Rector had to ring the Pancake Bell. Father Graham continued the tradition but also introduced a Pancake Race in Church Lane and invited all the mums from the village Playgroup and School to take part.

Another piece of folklore is the tradition that medieval vestments at the Catholic Church in Creswell once belonged to Checkley Church.

In October 1990 Father Graham, with his family, left to take up his new post as Vicar at the Parish Church of the Epiphany at Oxley, Wolverhampton - an urban parish and a far cry from rural Checkley.

My recollection of Father Graham is of a hard-working and caring man with vision, dedication and a strong sense of justice. I have this picture of him striding along in his cassock on his way from the new vicarage to the Church or whizzing along in his little Mini on his way to a service at his second Church in Stramshall. The 'Dashing Vicar' would have been an appropriate title for him.

Father Graham was replaced in March 1991 by the Rev. Tony Hodgson. His wife's name is Judith and they have two daughters, Susanna (23) and Jessica (22).

As this book goes to the printers I have just heard that Mrs. Jenny Chapman is retiring after 21 years at Checkley School, 11 as Headmistress. Mrs. Chapman, whose maiden name is Heath, came originally from Hollington. She is retiring on the grounds of ill health. Mr. Cookson was the Headmaster before her.



Joyce Hurst, who has been post-mistress of Checkley Post Office for over 40 years, with her husband Jack.

My name is Joyce Hurst (nee Roberts) and I have been sub-Post Mistress at Checkley Post Office since 1951. I was born in Uttoxeter. On 26 April 1947 I married John (Jack) Hurst at St. Giles' Parish Church, Cheadle. In 1951 our daughter Joan Ann was born in this house. She now resides in London. She married Michael Sadler in 1987. Both are in the teaching profession.

In 1947 we came to live with Jack's aunt, Lucy Hurst (nee Brough) who ran Checkley Village Shop and Post Office. Lucy's husband James Hurst had died in 1908 leaving her with two small boys to bring up alone - Alfred, 9 years and James, 4 years. A daughter Ann had died in infancy. The younger son James (Jim) died in 1946 at the age of 42 after a long illness. He had been about to get married when he fell ill with a brain tumour. Lucy nursed him and looked after him and at the same time kept the shop and Post Office going. Her other son Alfred died in 1949 from cancer. He was 50 years old. Lucy also nursed her aged Mother, Mrs. Edith Brough, at the Post Office until she died. Older Checkley residents can recall her Mother knocking on the ceiling above the shop when she wanted Lucy for something. All in all Aunty Lucy suffered more than her fair share of sorrow and hardship in her life. She died in 1955.

I took over from Aunt Lucy in 1951 when she'd been sub-post mistress for 38 years - since 1913. At that time she told me that I would never last that long as Post Mistress; this year, 1992, I have been sub-Post Mistress for 41 years, which means that the Hurst family have run the Post Office in Checkley for a total of 79 years.

When Aunt Lucy kept the Post Office it was situated in the living room and bandit screens were unheard of or required in those days. The telephone booth was on the lawn outside the front window. The original letter box with V.R. (Victoria Regina) cast on the front is still in use.

Since I took on the role of sub-Post Mistress a section of our living room was partitioned and used as the Post Office, fitted with bandit screens and an extensive alarm system.

The telephone kiosk was moved from the lawn onto the side of the pavement. In 1990 it was replaced with a modern glass kiosk and located on the main road near the village Community Centre. For some time I continued to sell groceries and sweets, but with the arrival of travelling shops and supermarkets the demand did not justify continuing the shop. I now only carry out Post Office duties.

During my time at Checkley many changes have taken place. In 1954 the sewage system was brought to the village and the school. Before that a cart would come round the village weekly and collect the buckets. The village was extended with the building of houses in Cranberry Avenue, St. Mary's Close and more recently, Badgers' Hollow and the New Vicarage. The Community Centre was built and extensions were made to the Hutchinson Memorial School.

The Barker and Shenton Garage was built and a lot of business was done there. It was later used for other businesses and at one time it was the site for a Sunday Market before being developed as a private housing estate.



August 1990 - the old red telephone kiosk is removed from Church Lane.

Living next to the Rectory we have had numerous changes of neighbours as the various parish incumbents moved in to replace those moving on. In my time I can remember Rev. Drinkwater, Rev. R. Philips, Rev. G. Lawson, Rev. S. Towlson, Rev. G. Fowell. The present vicar is Rev. T. Hodgson who arrived in 1991.

When the new Vicarage was built the Old Rectory next to the Church was sold. It is now a Rest Home for the elderly run by Mr. & Mrs. Johnson and family.

In 1989 North Sea Gas arrived in the village proper. Before that only people living in Badgers' Hollow had that amenity.



Joyce Hurst with Aunt Lucy (Hurst)



The Mill at Lower Tean



My name is Robert Faulkner and I have lived in either Lower Tean or Checkley all my life.

I remember Willie Waugh's Well in the 1920's. The water came out of a pipe in a bank and spread right across the field. There was a large water-cress bed; Percy Woolridge owned the land. The water-cress grew from about May and we used to collect it and take it home.

There was a pond on the main road in Checkley near where the bus stop is, close to Hawthorn Cottage. In the field between Hawthorn Cottage and Checkley School there used to be a big pond.

In the playground of Checkley School there used to be a school house where the Misses Whittingham lived.

Checkley Cricket Club played cricket on ground between the Community Centre and The New Broom.

Across the River Tean there used to be a very old barn with lots of old timbers and bricks. People lived in the top half and cattle used the bottom. It was starting to fall down and was demolished in the late sixties.

The Mill at Lower Tean was pulled down in the late twenties.

Near the Reading Room in Lower Tean there is a bungalow. The Wheatsheaf pub used to be on that site. Milners had a farm opposite.

OPPOSITE PAGE Bottom Photo

Willie Waugh's Well - bone dry during the dry summer of 1990 - local people said they had never known it to go dry before.

My name is Edna Laura Rowley (nee Rayson) and I was born on 12 February 1908 at Lower Tean. My father, Frank Rayson, was gamekeeper for Morton Philips and later for Humphrey Philips of Heybridge, Lower Tean.

The Raysons originally came from Warwickshire to work for the Shrewsburys at Alton Towers. My grandfather, James Rayson, was the gamekeeper there. My father was only a few weeks old when his parents came to live in Lower Tean. They lived in the last house on the right going down Mill Lane. When my mother and father married they lived at the bottom of Mill Lane in the second stone house on the left. All the houses there were owned by the Philips family of Heybridge.

My mother Anne (nee Johnson) came originally from Biddulph and was in service with the Bothams family of Cheadle when she met my father.

In 1911 when grandfather James Rayson retired my parents and all our family went to live at Leigh Lane Farm. We took the dog kennels up there as my father was still the gamekeeper at Heybridge. The kennels were still there when my brother, Frederick James, left some years ago.

There were seven children in the Rayson family. The eldest, Horace, married Lily Alcock who used to be a barmaid at the Dog & Partridge, Lower Tean. When I was a child they had to go outside in order to go to bed at the Dog & Partridge - the stairs were outside when the Barretts ran the pub. Horace and Lily lived at Checkley Bank Farm. Lily is still alive today and lives with her only daughter, Edna Milner, at Wisbar House, Checkley.

Edna's son, John Milner, lives in the house opposite Manor Farm where the Beddows used to live.

Next in the Rayson family was Freda who went to live in New Zealand, then Violet who went to live in Macclesfield, and Claude who was a builder in Lower Tean. I was next, followed by Frederick James who farmed at Leigh Lane Farm and finally Bert Rayson who used to live at Bank Farm, Checkley and later in a bungalow he and his wife had built in their back garden. Sadly he died suddenly in September 1991 in Checkley Churchyard.

We still went to Checkley School from Leigh Lane Farm. My younger brothers, Fred and Bert, were born there. Fred grew up on the farm and worked the farm until he was 65. I am the only one left of my parents' family. All our family are buried in Checkley Churchyard.

There were about 100 scholars at Checkley School when I went there. Mr. & Mrs. Salt were the teachers. Mrs. Salt always wore black satin dresses reaching to the floor with bustle, white lace collars and cuffs. The Salts lived in the school house in the playground.

Mr. Salt had a portable organ which he carried in a case and played it at school assemblies.

If you said something wrong you got the cane on your hands. We sat two to a desk. In winter we worked by the light of paraffin lamps.

It was a great shock to us when we heard that the Rector, the Rev. George Philips, had shot himself. We were in school that morning at 9.30 and heard a bang. We wondered what it was. It was in December 1920. Earlier that year the Rev. Philips had christened my brother Bert.

The Salts had one daughter but I don't remember much about her. When they retired they were replaced by the Whittingham sisters who came from Queen Street School in Fenton. Two of the sisters did the teaching while a third sister was housekeeper at the school house. Later, this sister taught us cooking in the school once a week. Before her a Mrs. Smith from the lodge at Heath House taught us to cook. Her husband was coachman for the Philips family of Heath House.

Twice a week on our way to school we would drop off some rabbits at Heybridge which our father, the gamekeeper, had trapped for the kitchen there. At Christmas all the servants' families at Heybridge got one pound of beef each per member of family and a mince pie on a paper plate to be shared between two people.

My father went to the Old School at Checkley - the one up the steps at the back of where John Milner and his family now live. I believe the bricks from that old school were used to build the Reading Room at Lower Tean.

My first husband was Samuel Henry Durose. We had two children, Horace Arthur and Douglas William. Samuel died in 1961. I later married Claudian Rowley. He died in 1987.

The Durose family lived at Checkley Fields Farm, Checkley from 1850 until my husband, Samuel Henry and I left there in 1959. We were the third generation to farm there. The farm was sold by Bagshaws of Uttoxeter. It was bought by Joe Ede of Manor Farm, Checkley.

Mr. and Mrs. Fairbanks lived in the house at the top of Checkley going down towards the Church. She was the caretaker at Checkley school. In winter she had to light all the coal fires to heat the school. All the toilets were outside.



Pupils of Checkley School circa 1907

PUPILS OF CHECKLEY SCHOOL circa 1907

TOP ROW: L to R

Horace Rayson - -

MIDDLE ROW:

- - - - Thomas Durose*
Samuel Henry Durose, Cyril Bailey

FRONT ROW:

- - - Frank Nunnley

* Thomas Durose was a soldier during World War I. He was killed on 12 November 1918 - the day after the Armistice was signed.

Photo courtesy Mrs. Edna Rowley (nee Rayson)

Where Bill and Margaret Maiden now live there was a stable where the Philips from Heath House put the horses while they were at the Church service on Sunday mornings. It was also used by the Philips of Heybridge.

Mr. and Mrs. Sam Thorley kept the Red Lion pub at Checkley. They also stabled horses in the stables there while people were at Church.

The room at the side of Heybridge Farm which faces the Dog & Partridge, Lower Tean, used to be a Mission Room. Everyone who worked at Heybridge used it. My mother, Mrs. Annie Rayson, went there to sew or knit. During the First World War they used to have services there at night instead of at Checkley Church because of the blackout. I can remember attending services there.



My name is Dug Durose and my family has lived in the Checkley area for generations.

As far back as I can remember there has been a tradition locally that there is a large underground lake between Tean and Fole. It's supposed to be about 1 mile wide by 3 miles long. Some years ago Fole Dairy drilled a borehole near the Dairy. All the farmers in the locality complained to the Dairy when the water started disappearing from their wells and springs. I believe the borehole was later capped.

About eight or nine years ago a company drilled for oil in Lower Tean. We never found out the results.

There is supposed to be a tunnel from Rectory Farm to Checkley Church and also one to Croxden Abbey.

In 1947 Percy Wright, a local lad, is supposed to have stopped the clock at Checkley Church by throwing a snowball at it.

My grandfather, Arthur Durose, was a blacksmith at Fole, Leigh and Tean. He did the ironwork and lamplight at the Church Lane entrance to Checkley Churchyard.

When I was a lad Mr. Fairbanks lived in the cottage at the top of Church Lane. He had a gammy leg and walked with a quarter-past-twelve look. India Rubber we called him.

A local character by the name of Mansion Davies lived above Joe Ede's cowshed.

My grandfather lived at Checkley Fields on a farm called Egypt.

A chap called Nailor kept taking logs from my grandfather's stockpile. My grandfather decided to teach him a lesson so he drilled some holes in some logs, filled the holes with gunpowder and put them where this fellow would be most likely to take them. He later heard that the explosion blew out the man's fireplace.

There used to be a cannonball in Checkley School. It was said that Cromwell's army fired a cannon and hit the Church. This was believed to account for the one plain window and the one odd pillar in the Church. As children we used to play with the cannon ball. I believe it disappeared when the school house was knocked down about ten years ago.



The Ford, River Tean, Checkley



Checkley Churchyard is a peaceful place. If you ever visit the beautiful Norman St. Mary & All Saints' Church it would be well worth your while to spend some time walking round the Churchyard exploring its antiquities and experiencing the calming effect of this last resting place of Checkleyites.

Checkley Churchyard
The wind sighing through the trees
Birds singing undisturbed
The distant hum of traffic
An overwhelming sense of peace.
Simple grey headstones
Checkley people at rest
Lord and servant
Shepherd and flock
Now sharing the common inevitable end
No inequality - no injustice -
no superiority
Just peace with each other
And peace with God.

CHECKLEY ACCIDENT

In Checkley Churchyard, on a gravestone, I found these tragic words:

'In loving memory of Sem aged 9 years
Elizabeth Ada aged 7 years
Arthur Frederick aged 5 years
The beloved children of Edward and
Caroline Whiting of Heath House Lodge
who were accidentally drowned
December 3rd 1893.
Suffer Little Children. '

In the William Salt Library in Stafford I eventually uncovered the full story of this tragedy in the columns of the Staffordshire Advertiser, dated 9 December 1893.

"A deplorable accident occurred at Tean at an early hour on Sunday morning. Edward Whiting, shepherd to Mr. J. Capel Philips, Heath House, observed four of his children playing round a pond situate near the Heath House Lodge and used for cattle purposes. There was a coating of ice on the water about three quarters of an inch in thickness, and the father distinctly warned the children not to venture upon the pond.

An hour later on passing the spot, an elder brother saw the little party and further cautioned them not to try the ice, but it appears that this advice was unfortunately disregarded.

Mrs. Whiting (the mother) having occasion to go to the front of the Lodge, saw the head of one of the little ones on the surface of the water. She immediately rushed to the pond and, while vainly endeavouring to save

her child, raised an alarm. Her shouts were heard by her eldest son, also employed as a shepherd on the estate, and he fortunately succeeded in rescuing the mother and child. It was now found that all the children (four in number) had embarked upon the ice. The bodies of three viz. Sem 9; Elizabeth Ada 7; and Arthur Frederick 5 being subsequently discovered at the bottom of the pond, and at once removed to the home. Dr. Davis was sent for on the instant, but his services were unavailing as regards the three children named. Stephen, the youngest child, has survived the calamity.

The scene of heartrending calamity was visited by a large number of people in the vicinity, the whole affair being totally unprecedented in the neighbourhood and there is naturally the deepest sympathy felt for the bereaved parents and family.

On Monday afternoon an inquest was held at The Quiet Woman Inn, Tean before Mr. A.A. Flint, Coroner, when after hearing statements of Mr. & Mrs. Whiting and their son William the Jury returned a verdict of accidental drowning. "

FROM THE STAFFORDSHIRE ADVERTISER

February 10, at Checkley after a short illness, the Rev. William Hutchinson, rural dean, for 39 years rector of the parish aged 78.

Saturday February 16, 1878

MRS. SARAH HUTCHINSON R.I.P.

On December 28 1898 there passed away a presence long familiar to the inhabitants of Checkley village and much loved by them. Sarah Hutchinson, wife of the late Rector, the Rev. Wm. Hutchinson, was called to her rest at the ripe age of 93. She, with the Rector and six children, came to Checkley in 1839 from Chester to succeed the Rev. Wm. Langley. She had a special gift for teaching and there are many girls and boys now grown up and scattered throughout the country who have learnt music, French and needlework from her out of School hours. In the Day Schools of Tean and Checkley and in the Sunday School she was indefatigable. Endowed with an unusual measure of health and vitality she never spared herself - ever ready to advise and sympathise she yet could fearlessly administer rebuke. Clever, brilliant and hospitable, she was widely known as a genial hostess. She educated her daughters herself. She experienced some bitter trials - a heavy blow being the loss of her eldest son, William, at the age of 19 in 1851 after nursing him with great devotion and fortitude. Next came the loss of her third daughter, Katherine, at the age of 31 from scarlet fever, through which she nursed her, and then the great parting with her husband in 1878, followed by the loss of another daughter in 1879. She then devoted her life to educating her Grandchildren and making them a home.

Mrs. Hutchinson was to be seen in her place in the Church on Sundays up to March last when she had a fall which kept her upstairs. She particularly bore the weakness of advancing years and loss of sight and hearing, waiting and ready for her last call.

On December 28 she had a heart attack, but seemed to rally. Towards evening she said she was tired and would sleep. She closed her eyes to this world and awoke to Joy and Peace. On Monday, January 2 1899 she was laid to rest in the grave with her husband, son and daughter, carried by old parishioners and those who knew her well.

Checkley Parish Magazine, No. 242, February 1899

IN MEMORIAM

George Hall
for 57 years
Clerk of Checkley
Died October 2, 1892
Aged 84 years
Also of Mary Ann
his wife
who died June 16, 1904
Aged 86

Here lieth the body of
Richard Owen Hall
who died 17 March 1895
Aged 34
He was for several years
Parish Clerk of Checkley
which office had been held
by members of his family
for over 200 years

At about 4.30 one November morning fifteen years ago Len Locke, a resident of Checkley, was taking his two dogs for a walk down the Old Road to Deadman's Green as he'd often done in the past before setting off for work. About a third of the way down, just by a big ash tree, the two dogs who were some way ahead of Len suddenly stopped as one and no amount of coaxing could get them to move on. On the way back Len's dogs stayed very close to him.

Len and his dogs had a similar experience not long afterwards at the corner of Checkley Churchyard, near the Red Lion Pub when once again the dogs refused to go on.

Since that time Len has been for many walks with his dogs down that same old road and at all hours, but never again has he had to turn back because of some eerie presence sensed only by animal instinct.

Bill Croft is well known in Checkley. He was Chairman of the Governors at Checkley School for 20 years, Church Warden at St. Mary's and All Saints for 15 years and Reader there for over 20 years. He is not a man known to exaggerate matters or given to imagining things. This then adds weight to the story he told me recently:

"One winter's night some years ago I was going into the Church by the North door as I had done many a time at all hours and seasons in the past when I felt myself enveloped by a weird sensation or presence - something quite strange and inexplicable. Strangely enough I wasn't frightened, but there was a definite though invisible presence. I sensed it rather than felt it. As soon as I stepped inside the Church the presence disappeared."

Bill went on to tell me that Ralph Philips had heard strange noises in the Old Rectory next to the Church while he was living there.

Tony Harrison of Cranberry Avenue, Checkley told me about a boundary stone made of Hollington stone which was rescued by Mr. E.J. Knobb of Park Hall Farm when the by-pass was being built. Despite many attempts on my part to find it I could not locate it. It is somewhere in the hedge of Mr. Knobb's farm overlooking the A50 by-pass near Checkley. It was either a boundary stone for the parish or a marker between Heybridge Estate and Park Hall. Perhaps some enterprising soul will locate it and photograph it, or inform local historians of its whereabouts.



Wibberleys lived in this house at Deadman's Green where they had a small-holding. The houses were demolished in 1991 with the Chapel to make way for new bungalows.

HOLY WELL IN CHECKLEY PARISH?

In White's Directory of Staffordshire of 1834 in the William Salt Library, Stafford I came across a reference to a well at Tean - " here is a well supposed to be efficacious as a remedy for sore eyes." Enquiries led nowhere. In a book called "Sacred Waters - Holy Wells and Water Lore in Britain and Ireland" by Janet and Colin Bord I found a reference to a Well in the Wall, in Checkley Parish, Staffordshire, "which in every month except July and August sprayed out small bones the size of sparrows' bones with the well water'. This confirmed there was a well somewhere in the parish but no one I spoke to had heard of it. One day while looking for the well in Mill Lane, Lower Tean, a Mrs. Turner who lived nearby pointed me to a well coming out of a bank some 300 yards away on the other side of the River Tean. There it was indeed, beautiful clear water coming out of a pipe in the bank, hidden away in the undergrowth just below a cowshed.

Later, in the William Salt Library, in Francis Redfern's History of Uttoxeter of 1886 I came across a reference to a garden at Over Tean of Major Ashby where in 1728 it "has the name of Willy Wall Well" and "which exists on the west side of the Tean Brook, almost opposite to Hall Green".

Local people knew about the Willy Wall or Waugh's Well but only for its water-cress beds in the 20's and 30's.

Despite many letters I was unable to find the original source for the reference to the Well in the Wall in "Sacred Waters" by Janet and Colin Bord until one lunch-time, on a hunch, I went into the William Salt Library and looked at a copy of Robert Plot's "Natural History of Staffordshire" of 1686. On page 90 I found the following:

- a well "which rising very plentifully from under a rock in the ground of Mr. Tho. Wood between Over and Nether Tene, on the west side of the river, and called the Well in the Wall, produces all the year round, except in July and August small bones (as the people will have it) of young sparrows or very young chicken".

Robert Plot goes on at length about the size and structure of the bones and that they are "plentiful about the fall of the leaf" (Autumn).

In August 1681 in a fountain at Leveson Gonne's house at Trentham Plot found "several frogs' skeletons with bones very similar to those at Tene". From that he concluded: "I found them (the bones) to be frogs' bones and quickly apprehended the process of Nature in the manage of the business viz that frogs in July and August, being in a declining condition, doe creep into such caverns or rocks, as whence this spring comes, and are there killed by the excessive coldness of the water; and not only their fleshy but gristly parts too there consumed" and "the leg and rib bones which are the only parts solid enough to resist the dissolving power of the water."

Needless to say I was disappointed that the mystery of the small bones had been solved in such a scientific way. I had hoped for a more miraculous or magical solution !



Samuel Langley, Rector of Checkley
1791 - 1839

In the following pages I have quoted unashamedly from Herbert Philips' book 'Recollections of Heybridge', 1907, a candid account of life as seen from the big house and based on the diaries of his mother, Loetitia Philips of Heybridge.

On 17 February 1839 my Mother states, I fear with satisfaction, "Old Langley dead and buried". Once only did I set eyes on that most curious specimen of the beneficed clergy; he was being led along the Checkley road in great decrepitude - a poor, old squalid figure. The event at once changed everything for the wide-spread Parish of Checkley. Mr. Hutchinson "read himself in" on 19 May and in a little over two months from that time his family must have entered into possession of the house which, for so many years to come, was to take the place of the Checkley Rectory.

I suppose that Mrs. Hutchinson still passed for a young woman when she first came to Checkley. I can remember her without the cap, which in those days ladies assumed so early. I can also remember that she sang at parties with characteristic force, but scarcely with melody. That she could teach singing I think was shown in after years - what could she not teach?

The only one of the seven children who was born at Checkley must have been Mrs. Hallowes.

The Hutchinsons possessed an Irish 'jaunting car' drawn by a sturdy horse, who soon became blind yet still performed his duty with tolerable efficiency.

The parishioners now had a Rector whom they could respect, even if they failed to grasp the drift of his pulpit discourses, and they



William Hutchinson, Rector of Checkley
1839 - 1878

were regularly visited in sickness and looked up at home with words of exhortation and reproof (when needed) in a way they had not been used to. Whether they liked it altogether is a different matter.

For the children of the Parish a revolution had begun. What may have existed before as a Sunday School I cannot tell, but now it became a reality under Mrs. Hutchinson. She had that sharp, quick way of looking, speaking and acting which commands obedience and tells at once with children. Over that school she was destined to reign supreme for half a century, and more!

It may be of interest to recall the aspect of Checkley church on a Sunday morning, when the congregation was gathered for service under the eyes of the little six year old boy in the Heybridge seat up in the North gallery. In the opposite gallery facing us, the front pews were those of Heath House distinguished by the family crest, of Oak Hill filled by Charlewoods, and of Tean Hurst, occupied by Mrs. Porter and Miss Thomas. The next row behind was filled by the servants of the respective families. In the case of Mrs. Porter there were James Bates, her faithful coachman, gardener and butler; Mary, the house and parlour maid and Sarah, the cook, all to be remembered for their devoted service through long years. At the back sat Ashton Travis, and his father, of Tean Croft, Fox, the Heath House steward, and his children - all doomed to die of consumption, and the Milners of Lower Tean. Perhaps I may pause on the name of Ashton Travis because he possessed, in addition to great decorum of look, and manner, one peculiar characteristic - a very high esteem for the honourable estate of courtship, but

a great mistrust of that other estate, to which it is generally supposed to be a prelude. Miss Lowe, the Infant School mistress of this time, just come in the freshness of her youth, was very soon distinguished by the decorous attentions of Ashton Travis. Whether she ever esteemed herself to be his victim I cannot say. They walked to church together and sat side by side for years, but the expected "banns" were never published.

I don't know whether I shall again have to notice the Milner family, who represented the first circle in Lower Tean. Mr. Milner worked the corn mill and was also one of my Father's tenants. He had declined in circumstances and was not always ready with his rent. In middle age he had the manners and ways of a man who held himself superior to those of his own class in the place, and this temper rather distinguished the various members of his family, male and female.

Behind us sat Mrs. Jones, the wife of Joseph Jones - gardener at Heath House, with her children. A very silent, self contained woman she always seemed to be - a much enduring one she no doubt was, for Jones was not a sober man and drink made him violent. Beyond the empty pew on the front was a very well filled one, containing the Westons of Goldhurst, cousins of the Milners, a stalwart, blue-eyed, yellow-haired race. Father Weston always seemed to be relieving himself by hard breathing after his long walk, and I fear he was one of the most regular slumberers during sermons.

The Salts, and a few casuals, whom I cannot specify, were other occupants of our gallery.

Then there were the four singers, two males and two females. Of these Job Bently was the bass and Dawson the tenor. The women I never learnt to distinguish but they were "lappers" in Tean Tape Mill, where Job was weaver. He was quite an impressive spectacle when singing. He seemed to pump out his deep notes with much effort from some region far below the chest.

I will now drop from the galleries into the body of the Church and must naturally begin with the chancel, where in three pews were gathered the Mountfords of Beamhurst and their dependents, including two smart livery servants in blue.

Advancing down the Church I recall the occupants of the front pew on the south side of the aisle as a stout black-haired man, Lovatt of Fole, with a red-haired companion younger than himself. Behind them sat the Woods of Tean Hall - old Joseph - young Joseph (young only by courtesy) and Betty, his sister. They were early comers, and put so much effort into their two mile walk that Betty's broad red face required many applications of her handkerchief during service. They kept their prayer books in a substantial box, the loud shutting and locking of which seemed always to bring a sort of business element into the conclusion of service.

Further down came the array of Heybridge servants - men and maids. On the north side, which was naturally less under my observation, I chiefly remember the Walters family. Mrs. Walters was a daughter of the old Rector - Langley. She had married the veterinary surgeon, who became a well-known figure on the road as he ambled along on his round of duty. He rode well-chosen, no longer young, horses which he educated into his favourite

pace of ambling - something between a trot and a canter - said to be easy both for rider and horse. Of this I cannot judge. None of the many horses I have ridden have ever offered to amble with me and I have not had the skill to teach them. The Walters' pew held some handsome well-grown children, in addition to Walters and his wife. It did not always contain Walters himself. There were periods of alienation both from secular and religious duty, covered by his occasional drinking "bouts", and these were atoned for by periods of extraordinary abstinence and general attendance in the family pew. He was constantly under moral treatment at the hands of both Mr. and Mrs. Hutchinson and no doubt gave them a great deal of trouble.

I believe that every class in the Parish was represented at the Checkley services, but there must have been many absentees amongst the farmers, and still more amongst the labourers. Very few of the Tean workpeople walked that two miles on a Sunday and religion in that part of the Parish must have been kept alive chiefly by the Wesleyan Chapel. The few labouring men who came to Church were mostly gathered under the organ gallery. Amongst them I call to mind Thomas Fower - a burly fellow - honest I feel sure in the main, but now and again overcome by the temptation to have a "plunge" and very uproarious during the week of dissipation. After these excesses he returned to his seat in Church, looking meek and penitent. It was unfortunate that when Mr. Hutchinson had occasion to warn his congregation against drunkenness and dissipation, he always seemed to lean forward with a searching glance towards the spot where the penitent Fower was sitting.

The Sunday School children were partly arranged on a bench along the south wall and partly in adjacent pews. They were under the control of a man, whose own devotions were of a very intermittent character, as he was constantly diving in and out among the boys and using his prayer book as an instrument of correction. Offenders of the worst type were sometimes dragged out in front of the pulpit where they stood weeping loudly under the full gaze of the Congregation. When the adjacent Rectory pew came to be occupied by Mrs. Hutchinson this must have been a very terrible position for the culprit.

A modest desk beneath the pulpit marked the position of George Hall, the clerk, a sandy haired man, mournful in look and voice. I never remember to have seen him relax into a smile, although he was quite as familiar a sight in his secular occupation of gardener and groom at the Rectory as in his official desk at Church.

It was the custom at Checkley for the livery servants to disappear at once when the congregation moved at the conclusion of the sermon, to kneel and receive the blessing of the preacher. This was a very disturbing and unseemly custom, as the clatter of the Heath House men along the gallery, and downstairs, and the simultaneous breaking forth of the Heybridge men from the centre of the Church, and the Beamhurst men from the chancel door, made the Rector's voice inaudible. Why he endured this custom so long, I cannot now conceive. The object aimed at was the getting the horses put to so that, upon their leisurely exit at the tail of the congregation, the carriage folk might not be kept waiting. A single word of remonstrance would have set the matter right at once.

There was one personage of importance in Tean with whom we never had any dealings. This was Mr. Ritchie, the surgeon and general practitioner, and parish doctor, who rode on horseback when about his professional duties. I don't know whether he was badly mounted, but he always looked ill at ease in the saddle. Of his medical abilities a very low estimate was formed at Heybridge, and he never to my knowledge entered the house. My Mother would always shake her head in despair when she heard of any case of serious illness falling into his hands. Nevertheless Mr. Ritchie continued year after year to occupy the principal residence in the main street of Tean, and there he and his portly wife brought up a fair sized family of children, some of whom have prospered in the world, so that the chilly mistrust of the reigning family did him very little injury after all.

I think there is only one other Tean person I need mention, and I only do so because he belonged to a now extinct class. This was Sammy Faulkner, the parish constable. There was nothing formidable about his aspect, but it was enough for me to be told that he possessed the power of "taking up" people, and putting them in the stocks, or in the small but massive lock up on the bridge. I rather dreaded Sammy Faulkner. I never saw anyone in his stocks, but I believe they were in proper repair, and occasional use during my early years.

One other celebrated character must not be forgotten - and the following account of him is given by Mr. J.W. Philips: John Perkin acted at Heybridge as Game Keeper, and was also Postman. He lost his arm owing to disease of the elbow joint, when he was a boy of sixteen, but was extraordinarily clever with his one arm and hand, and his teeth, and could

tie a fly that caught Tean Brook Trout. A thunder-bolt came through the wall of the house into the room where he was sitting, and he was unhurt. He said: "Greatest blessing as iver happened i' Lower Tean."

I never remember the Cheadle and Uttoxeter road in the palmy days of coaching. The London coaches were taken off by the time I attained my fourth birthday. There remained, however, two coaches running between Newcastle and Derby - the Express and the Red Rover - of which my memory retains a clear impression. They were not well horsed; there was no "dash" about them, and if the Guard sounded a horn I had seldom the good luck to hear it.

The Carriers' carts lumbered along, generally carrying coal, but with a projecting tray for parcels. The man we favoured in this line was named Alcock, a lusty red-faced fellow, not always quite sober, but fairly reliable as times went.

A humbler conveyance for coal from Cheadle eastwards was a train of donkies, carrying their loads on pack saddles, driven by a limping man with a paralysed left arm called Jemmy Anthony. His deformity, his coal-blackened face and the growling voice with which he urged on his poor beasts of burden, conspired to make him a terror to me and I drew very close to my nurse when he hove in sight.

By kind permission of Mrs. M. Philips of Heath House.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all those who helped me to produce this book.

In particular I want to thank -

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There is an excellent booklet on St. Mary &
All Saints Church by Clive Smith published in
1987 and on sale at the Church.

CONCLUSION

Four years have gone into the production of this book and I could have gone on for at least another year collecting people's memories, taking photos, copying old photos, looking at family trees and delving into the past.

I had to finish the book at some stage and am very conscious that there might be some people who for one reason or another I never managed to contact to record their memories. I apologise for that.

Similar books could be written on Tean, Lower Tean, Deadman's Green, Fole, Beamhurst, Checkley School, Hollington, the Leigh villages - the list is endless. If anyone has memories and would like them recorded for posterity, or if anyone is interested in collecting people's memories, I will be only too happy to advise.

If you can identify any of the people in the photos or if you know of any people with stories to tell, please let me know.

I would be particularly interested to know if there are any descendants of the Hutchinsons still living.

It is expected that this book will cover its costs, but should there be any profits they will be used to fund similar projects.

Jim Foley